HINDU MANNERS, CUSTOMS AND CEREMONIES

DUBOIS

II

HENRY FROWDE, M.A.
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HINDU MANNERS, CUSTOMS AND CEREMONIES

BY THE

ABBÉ J. A. DUBOIS

TRANSLATED FROM THE AUTHOR'S LATER FRENCH MS. AND EDITED WITH NOTES, CORRECTIONS, AND BIOGRAPHY

BY

HENRY K. BEAUCHAMP

A.H.I.I.T.

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CHAPTER XVIII

Mourning.—The Condition of Widowhood.—The General Contempt for Widows.—Remarriages forbidden.

The happiest death for a woman is that which overtakes her while she is still in a wedded state. Such a death is looked upon as the reward of goodness extending back for many generations[1]; on the other hand, the greatest misfortune that can befall a wife is to survive her husband.

Should the husband die first, as soon as he breathes his last the widow attires herself in her best clothes and bedecks herself with all her jewels[2]. Then, with all the signs of the deepest grief, she throws herself on his body, embracing it and uttering loud cries. She holds the corpse tightly clasped in her arms until her parents, generally silent spectators of this scene, are satisfied that this first demonstration of grief is sufficient, when they restrain her from these sad embraces. She yields to their efforts with great reluctance, and with repeated pretences of escaping out of their hands and rushing once again to the lifeless remains of her husband. Then, finding her attempts useless, she rolls on the ground like one possessed, strikes her breast violently, tears out her hair, and manifests many other signs of the deepest despair. Now, are these noisy professions of grief and affliction to be attributed to an excess of conjugal affection, to real sorrow? The answer will appear rather perplexing, when we remark that it is the general custom to act in this manner, and that all these demonstrations are previously arranged as a part of the ceremonies of mourning.

After the first outbursts of grief, she rises, and, assuming

[1] Children are even consoled with the thought, when their mothers die in a wedded state.—Ed.

[2] This is the last occasion on which she is allowed to wear ornaments of any kind.—Ed.

a more composed look, approaches her husband's body. Then in one continuous strain, which would be hardly possible under real affliction, she apostrophizes her husband in a long series of questions, of which I give a summary below:—

'Why hast thou forsaken me? What wrong have I done thee, that thou shouldst thus leave me in the prime of my life? Had I not for thee all the fondness of a faithful wife? Have I not always been virtuous and pure? Have I not borne thee handsome children? Who will bring them up? Who will take care of them hereafter? Was I not diligent in all the duties of the household? Did I not sweep the house every day, and did I not make the floor smooth and clean? Did I not ornament the floor with white tracery? Did I not cook good food for thee? Didst thou find grit in the rice that I prepared for thee? Did I not serve up to thee food such as thou lovedst, well seasoned with garlic, mustard, pepper, cinnamon, and other spices? Did I not forestall thee in all thy wants and wishes? What didst thou lack whilst I was with thee? Who will take care of me hereafter?'

And so on. At the end of each sentence uttered in a plaintive chanting tone, she pauses to give free vent to her sobs and shrieks, which are also uttered in a kind of rhythm. The women that stand around join her in her lamentations, chanting in chorus with her. Afterwards, she addresses the gods, hurling against them torrents of blasphemies and imprecations. She accuses them openly of injustice in thus depriving her of her protector. This scene lasts till her eloquence becomes exhausted, or till her lungs are wearied out and she is no longer capable of giving utterance to her lamentations. She then retires to take rest for a while, and to prepare some new phrases against the time when the body is being prepared for the funeral pyre.

The more vehement the expression of a woman's grief, the more eloquent and demonstrative her phrases, the more apparently genuine her contortions on such occasions, so much the more is she esteemed a woman of intelligence and education. The young women who are present pay the most minute attention to all that she says or does; and if they observe anything particularly striking in her flights of rhetoric, in her attitudes, or in any of her efforts to excite the attention

of the spectators, they carefully treasure it in their memory, to be made use of should a similar misfortune ever happen to themselves. If a wife who was really afflicted by the loss of her husband confined herself to shedding real tears and uttering real sobs, she would only be thoroughly despised and considered an idiot. The parents of a young widow once complained to me of her stupidity as follows: 'So foolish is she that, on the death of her husband, she did not utter a single word; she did nothing but cry, without saying anything[1].'

In several parts of India, as formerly among the Greeks and Romans, professional women mourners may be hired. When called in to attend the obsequies, these women arrive with dishevelled hair and only half clothed, wearing their scanty garments in a disordered fashion. Collecting in a group round the deceased, they commence by setting up in unison the most doleful cries, at the same time beating their breasts in measured time. They weep, sob, and shriek in turns. Then addressing themselves to the deceased, each in succession eulogizes his virtues and good qualities. Anon they apostrophize him, vehemently remonstrating with him for quitting life so soon. Finally, they point out to him, in the plainest possible terms, that he could not have committed a more foolish act. In discharging these duties, which are a curious mixture of tragedy and comedy, they take turn and turn about, and their affected sorrow lasts until the corpse is removed. As soon as the obsequies are over, they receive their wages, and their faces, which were so lugubrious a few moments before, once more assume their wonted calmness.

Widows, who in the learned tongue are called *vidhava*, a word akin to the Latin *vidua*, are held in much less respect than other women; and when they happen to have no children, they are generally looked upon with the utmost scorn. The very fact of meeting a widow is calculated to bring ill-luck.

[1] The Hebrews also, on the death of friends and relatives, made a great parade of all the external signs of sorrow. They cried, rent their garments, beat their breasts, tore out their hair or beards, or else had them cut, and even inflicted cuts on their bodies. See Leviticus xix. 28, xxi. 5; Jeremiah xvi. 6, &c.—DUBOIS.

They are called *moonda*, a reproachful term which means 'shorn-head,' because every widow is supposed to have her hair cut off. This rule, however, is not everywhere followed, especially among the Sudras[1]. When women quarrel, this opprobrious term, *moonda*, is generally the first abusive word that passes.

A widow has to be in mourning till her death. The signs of mourning are as follows:—She is expected to have her head shorn once a month; she is not allowed to chew betel; she is no longer permitted to wear jewels, with the exception of one very plain ornament round her neck; she must wear coloured clothes no longer, only pure white ones; she must not put saffron on her face or body, or mark her forehead[2]. Furthermore, she is forbidden to take part in any amusement or to attend family festivities, such as marriage feasts, the ceremony of *upanayana*, and others; for her very presence would be considered an evil omen.

A very few days after the death of her husband, a widow's house is invaded by female friends and relatives, who begin by eating a meal prepared for them. After this they surround the widow and exhort her to bear her miserable lot with fortitude. One after another they take her in their arms, shed tears with her, and end by pushing her violently to the ground. They next join together in lamenting her widowhood, and finally make her sit on a small stool. Then, one of her nearest female relatives, having previously muttered some religious formulae, cuts the thread of the *tali*, the gold ornament which every married woman in India wears round her neck. The barber is called in, and her head is clean shaved. This double ceremony sinks her instantly into the despised and hated class of widows. During the whole time that these curious and mournful rites are being performed, the unfortunate victim is making the whole house resound with her cries of woe, cursing her sad lot a thousand times.

The thread of the *tali* must be cut, not untied. This practice has given rise to a very common curse; two women when

[1] And also among the Tengalai Vaishnava Brahmins.—ED.

[2] She must, however, smear her forehead with sacred ashes if she is a widow of the Saiva sect, and mark her forehead with red powder if a Vaishnava.—ED.

quarrelling never forget to say to each other: 'May you have your *tali* cut!' which means, 'May you become a widow!'

The signs of sorrow manifested by a Hindu lady who loses her husband are of so exaggerated a description that one cannot help doubting their perfect sincerity; yet it is impossible that any Hindu widow could face the sad future awaiting her with tearless eyes. Doomed to perpetual widowhood, cast out of society, stamped with the seal of contumely, she has no consolation whatever, except maybe the recollection of hardships that she has had to endure during her married life.

I do not refer here to those unfortunate girls of five or six years of age, who, married to Brahmins of over sixty, very often become widows before they attain the age of puberty. Fortunately their youth and inexperience prevent their brooding over the sad condition in which they have been placed by such inhuman and iniquitous prejudices. But think of the numberless young widows in the prime of life and strength. How do they bear up against this cruel expulsion from the society of their fellow-creatures? The answer is, Better than one would be inclined to believe. The fact is, they must perforce be resigned to their fate; and however despised a widow may be, there is this consolation, that one who remarries is a hundred times more so, for she is shunned absolutely by every honest and respectable person. Thus there are few widows who would not look upon proposals to remarry as a downright insult, though in this respect they are seldom put to the test. Even an old gouty Brahmin, as poor as Irus, would feel indignant at the very suggestion of marrying a widow, though she were rich and endowed with all the charms of youth and beauty.

One result of this prejudice, which is firmly and irrevocably established in India, is that the country abounds with widows, especially among the Brahmins. Among this caste *shorn-heads* are to be seen everywhere. Of course a certain corruption of morals is the inevitable result of such a state of things, but it is not pushed to such an extent as might be expected. The natural modesty of Hindu women, the way in which they are brought up, their ordinarily chaste and circumspect demeanour, the calmness of their passions: all these go a great way towards providing as it were strong barriers against the attacks of the licentious, who, whatever may be said to the contrary by ill-

informed writers, do not succeed in winning over women of the better class so easily as in many other countries where the lawful union of the two sexes is not beset with so many obstacles.

Besides, even if we refuse to believe that young widows possess in themselves sufficient strength of will to resist seduction, there are many other obstacles beyond their own control, which also serve as so many bulwarks to their modesty. Chief among such obstacles must be reckoned the diligent watchfulness exercised over them by their parents; the severity of the *convenances* which forbid any kind of familiar intercourse between men and women; the very heavy punishments which follow even the most trivial lapses; and, finally, the mere disgrace, which in India, above all countries of the world, entails the most tremendous penalties on the person detected in an indiscretion[1].

[1] The social reformers of the present day are doing all that they can to encourage the remarriage of *virgin* widows, those unhappy girls who, married before they come of age, become widows before cohabitation with their husbands is possible. So far, however, the success which these reformers have met with is extremely small, and those who brave caste custom in this respect are invariably outcasted.—ED.

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CHAPTER XIX

The Custom which at times obliges Widows to allow themselves to be burnt alive on the Funeral Pyre of their Deceased Husbands.

ALTHOUGH the ancient and barbarous custom which imposes the duty on widows of sacrificing themselves voluntarily on the funeral pyre of their husbands has not been expressly abolished, it is much more rare nowadays than formerly, especially in the southern parts of the Peninsula. In the North of India and in the provinces bordering on the Ganges, however, women are only too frequently seen offering themselves as victims of this horrid superstition, and, either through motives of vanity or through a spirit of blind enthusiasm, giving themselves up to a death which is as cruel as it is foolish.

The Mahomedan rulers never tolerated this horrible practice in the provinces subject to them; but, notwithstanding their prohibition, wretched fanatics have more than once succeeded in bribing the subordinate representatives of authority to give permission to commit the deed in violation of the laws of humanity and common sense.

The great European Power which nowadays exercises its sway all over the country has tried, by all possible means of persuasion, to put an end altogether to this barbarous custom; but its efforts have been only partially successful, and, generally speaking, it has been obliged to shut its eyes to this dreadful practice, since any attempt to remedy it by force would have exposed it to dangerous opposition.

Nobody is a greater admirer than myself of the wise spirit that animates this enlightened and liberal Government in manifesting to its Hindu subjects such a full and perfect tolerance in the practice of their civil and religious usages; and nobody is more fully alive than I am to the dangers and difficulties that an open

defiance of these prejudices, which are looked upon as sacred and inviolable, would give rise to. But does the abominable custom in question form part of Hindu institutions? Are there any rules which prescribe its observance by certain castes? All the information which I have been able to gather on the subject tends to make me believe that there are no such rules. The infamous practice, although encouraged by the impostors who regulate religious worship, is nowhere prescribed in an imperative manner in the Hindu books. It is left entirely to the free will and pleasure of the victims who thus sacrifice themselves. No blame and no discredit are attached nowadays to the wife whose own honest judgement suggests that she ought not to be in such a hurry to rejoin in the other world the husband who so often made her wretched in this. It would be quite possible, therefore, by the display of firmness, combined with prudence, to strike, without any considerable danger, at the very root of this shocking practice. Certainly it reflects discredit on the Government which tolerates it and manifests no great indignation[1] with regard to it.

[1] During recent years, owing to the number of these abominable sacrifices being on the increase, especially in the Bengal Presidency and in the districts bordering on the Ganges, the Government has thought fit to interfere to check this inconceivable mania by adopting at least persuasive measures. It has, therefore, directed the different magistrates scattered about the country to examine very minutely all the circumstances attending the custom of *suttee* (this is the name by which these barbarous sacrifices are known), and never to sanction it except after exhausting all the means to oppose it which prudence may suggest to them. No woman can, therefore, now devote herself to a death of this kind without the sanction of the magistracy. When such permission is sought, the magistrates cause the victim to appear before them and question her carefully to assure themselves that her resolution is entirely voluntary, and that no outside influence has been brought to bear upon her. They then try by every possible exhortation and counsel to induce her to give up her horrible design. But should the widow remain firm in her resolution, they leave her mistress of her own fate. The Protestant missionaries, when they first arrived in the country, expressed a just horror of these abominable sacrifices, and strove to diminish their number; but being ill acquainted with the character of the Hindus and with their devoted attachment to custom, they used brusque and violent measures which only resulted in augmenting the evil. I have seen the lists of widows who had sacrificed themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands from 1810 (the period at which the missionaries commenced their labours) up to the year 1820; and I have remarked that the number of these victims progressively increased every year during that space of time. In 1817 there were 706 *suttees* in the Bengal Presidency. It

It was principally in the noble caste of Rajahs that the *suttee* originated. It was looked upon as a highly honourable proof of wifely attachment and love, which enhanced the glory of the families of these wretched victims of blind zeal. Should a widow, by reason of a natural fondness for life or through lack of courage, endeavour to avoid the honour of being burnt alive on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband, she was considered to be offering a gross insult to his memory.

I was once able to thoroughly convince myself of the influence which this false point of honour still exercises over the minds of fanatical Hindus, and at the same time to discern that this act of devotion to which these wretched victims sacrificed themselves is not always the result of their own free will and resolution. The poligar or prince of Cangoondy in the Carnatic having died, neither entreaties nor threats were spared to induce his widow to allow herself to be burnt alive with him. It was urged that this honourable custom had been observed for a long time past in the family, and that it would be a great pity, indeed, to allow it to fall into disuse. The funeral ceremonies were delayed from day to day in the hope that the widow would at last make up her mind to prefer a glorious death to a remnant of life spent in contempt and opprobrium. It was a fruitless attempt! The obstinate princess turned a deaf ear to all the pressing entreaties of her relatives; and ultimately the deceased was obliged to depart alone to the other world.

It must, however, be confessed that some widows commit this folly readily enough, spurred on as they are by the thought of the wretchedness of widowhood, by vanity, by the hope of acquiring notoriety, perhaps also by a genuine feeling of enthusiasm. It should be remembered that they are awarded boundless honours, and are even deified after death. Vows are made and prayers addressed to them, and their intercession is sought in times of sickness and adversity. Such remnants of their

is true that this insane practice is much more in vogue on the banks of the Ganges than anywhere else. In the southern parts of the Peninsula of India *suttees* are seldom seen. I am convinced that in the Madras Presidency, which numbers at least thirty millions of inhabitants, not thirty widows allow themselves to be thus burnt during a year.—DUBOIS.

Suttee is now, of course, absolutely abolished. Its prohibition by law was effected during the Governor-Generalship of Lord William Bentinck (1825–1835), at the instance of the great Rajah Ram Mohun Roy.—ED.

bodies as have not been entirely consumed by the fire are most devoutly gathered together, and on the spot where they have sacrificed themselves small monumental pyramids are erected to transmit to posterity the memory of these brave victims of conjugal affection—a tribute all the more conspicuous, because the erection of tombs is almost unknown among the Hindus [1]. In a word, women who have had the courage to deliver themselves so heroically to the flames are numbered among the divinities, and crowds of devotees may be seen coming in from all sides to offer them sacrifices and to invoke their protection.

To these inducements of vain and empty glory—sufficient of themselves to make a deep impression on a feeble mind—must be added the entreaties of relatives, who, if they perceive the slightest inclination on the part of the widow to offer up her life, spare no means in order to convince her and force her to a final determination. At times they go so far as to administer drugs, which so far deprive her of her senses that under their influence she yields to their wishes. This inhuman and abominable method of wheedling a consent out of the unhappy woman is in their opinion justified, because her tragic end would bring great honour and glory to the whole of their family.

Some authors have maintained that this detestable practice originated primarily either from the jealousy of husbands, or rather, perhaps, from their fear that their discontented wives might seek to get rid of them by poison. As for myself, I have been unable, either in the writings of Hindu authors, or in my free and familiar intercourse with many persons well versed in the manners and customs of the country, to discover any justification for either of these two theories. And surely the lot of a wife, even when she is doomed to suffer wrong at the hands of a cruel and immoral husband, is far preferable to that of a widow, to whom all hope of a remarriage under happier conditions is forbidden. It is hardly likely, indeed, that Hindu women would go to the length of committing a crime which must render their lot much worse than before! At the same time I am by no means inclined to attri-

[1] In some old Hindu houses, even to this day, may be seen, impressed with turmeric paste on the walls, the marks of the hands of women who underwent *suttee*.—ED.

bute these voluntary sacrifices to an excess of conjugal affection. We should, for instance, be greatly mistaken were we to allow ourselves to be deceived by the noisy lamentations which wives are accustomed to raise on the death of their husbands, and which are no more than rank hypocrisy. During the long period of my stay in India, I do not recall two Hindu marriages characterized by a union of hearts and displaying true and mutual attachment[1].

When a woman, after mature deliberation, has once declared that she desires to be burnt alive with her deceased husband, her decision is considered irrevocable. She cannot afterwards retract; and should she refuse to proceed of her own free will to the funeral pyre, she would be dragged to it by force. The Brahmins who regulate all the proceedings of the tragedy, and also her relatives, come by turns to congratulate her on her heroic decision and on the immortal glory which she is about to acquire by such a death—a death which will exalt her to the dignity of the gods. All possible means which fanaticism and superstition can suggest are brought to bear upon her in order to keep up her courage, to exalt her enthusiasm, and to excite her imagination. When, at last, the fatal hour draws nigh, the victim is adorned with rare elegance: she is clothed in her richest apparel, is bedecked with all her jewels, and is thus led to the funeral pyre.

It is impossible for me to describe the finishing scenes of this dreadful ceremony without feelings of distress. But, in the meantime, I must solicit the indulgence of my readers for a short digression which is not wholly disconnected with my subject. When a husband has several lawful wives, as often happens in the caste of the Rajahs, the wives sometimes dispute as to who shall have the honour of accompanying their common husband to the funeral pyre, and the Brahmins who preside at the ceremony determine which shall have the preference. Here is an instance to the point extracted from the *Mahābhārata*, one of their most esteemed books:—

[1] It is impossible to regard the conclusion here drawn as anything but greatly exaggerated. The influence of women, ignorant and uneducated as they are, is in many Hindu households exceedingly strong, and it is an error to picture them as the mere slaves of the men, though the ascendency of the latter is still a marked feature of Hindu sociology.—ED.

'King Pandu had retired into the jungles with his two wives, there to devote himself to acts of penance. At the same time a curse was imposed upon him, which doomed him to instant death should he dare to have intercourse with either of them. The passion which he felt for the younger of his wives, who was extremely beautiful, overcame all fear of death; and, in spite of the fact that for several days she continued to represent to him the dire results that must necessarily follow his incontinency, he yielded at last to the violence of his love; and immediately the curse fell upon him. After his death, it was necessary to decide which of his two wives should follow him to the funeral pyre, and there arose a sharp altercation between them as to who should enjoy this honour.

'The elder of the two spoke first, and addressing the assembly of Brahmins who had gathered together for the purpose, she urged that the fact of her being the first wife placed her above the second. She should, therefore, be given the preference. Besides, she urged, her companion had children who were still young, and who required their mother's personal care and attention for their bringing up[1].

'The second wife admitted the seniority of the first; but she maintained that she alone, having been the immediate cause of the sad death of their common husband in allowing him to defy the curse which doomed him to perish, was thereby entitled to the honour of being burnt with him. "As regards the bringing up of my children," she added, addressing the other wife, "are they not yours just as much as they are mine? Do not they too call you mother? And by your age and experience are you not better fitted than I to attend to their bringing up?"'

In spite of the eloquence of the younger wife, it was, at last, unanimously agreed by the judges that the first wife should have the preference—a decision at which the latter lady was greatly delighted.

Most Sudras, as well as Hindus of the Siva sect, bury their dead instead of burning them, and there are several

[1] The custom of *suttee* does not require widows who have young children to burn themselves with the body of their husbands; they are even forbidden to do so. Does this exception proceed from a feeling of humanity? By no manner of means! It is actuated merely by the fear that a large number of orphans would become a burden to the community.—DUBOIS.

instances of wives having been buried alive with their deceased husbands. But the ceremonies in either case are nearly the same.

I will relate here two incidents which took place at no great distance from the place where I was living, and which will give a good idea of what these deplorable scenes of mad fanaticism are like:—

In 1794, in a village of the Tanjore district called Pudupettah, there died a man of some importance belonging to the *Komatty* (Vaisya) caste. His wife, aged about thirty years, announced her intention of accompanying her deceased husband to the funeral pyre. The news having rapidly spread abroad, a large concourse of people flocked together from all quarters to witness the spectacle. When everything was ready for the ceremony, and the widow had been richly clothed and adorned, the bearers stepped forward to remove the body of the deceased, which was placed in a sort of shrine, ornamented with costly stuffs, garlands of flowers, green foliage, &c., the corpse being seated in it with crossed legs, covered with jewels and clothed in the richest attire, and the mouth filled with betel. Immediately after the funeral car followed the widow, borne in a richly decorated palanquin. On the way to the burning-ground she was escorted by an immense crowd of eager sight-seers, lifting their hands towards her in token of admiration, and rending the air with cries of joy. She was looked upon as already translated to the paradise of Indra, and they seemed to envy her happy lot.

While the funeral procession moved slowly along, the spectators, especially the women, tried to draw near to her to congratulate her on her good fortune, at the same time expecting that, in virtue of the gift of prescience which such a meritorious attachment must confer upon her, she would be pleased to predict the happy things that might befall them here below. With gracious and amiable mien she declared to one that she would long enjoy the favours of fortune; to another, that she would be the mother of numerous children who would prosper in the world; to a third, that she would live long and happily with a husband who would love and cherish her; to a fourth, that her family was destined to attain much honour and dignity and so forth. She then distributed among them leaves of betel;

and the extraordinary eagerness with which these were received clearly proved that great value was attached to them as relics. Beaming with joy, these women then withdrew, each in the full hope that the promised blessings of wealth and happiness would be showered on her and hers.

During the whole procession, which was a very long one, the widow preserved a calm demeanour. Her looks were serene, even smiling[1]; but when she reached the fatal place where she was to yield up her life in so ghastly a manner, it was observed that her firmness suddenly gave way. Plunged, as it were, in gloomy thought, she seemed to pay no attention whatever to what was passing around her. Her looks became wildly fixed upon the pile. Her face grew deadly pale. Her very limbs were in a convulsive tremor. Her drawn features and haggard face betrayed the fright that had seized her, while a sudden weakening of her senses betokened that she was ready to faint away.

The Brahmins who conducted the ceremony, and also her near relatives, ran quickly to her, endeavouring to keep up her courage and to revive her drooping spirits. All was of no effect. The unfortunate woman, bewildered and distracted, turned a deaf ear to all their exhortations and preserved a deep silence.

She was then made to leave the palanquin, and as she was scarcely able to walk, her people helped her to drag herself to a pond near the pyre. She plunged into the water with all her clothes and ornaments on, and was immediately afterwards led to the pyre, on which the body of her husband was already laid. The pyre was surrounded by Brahmins, each with a lighted torch in one hand and a bowl of ghee in the other. Her relatives and friends, several of whom were armed with muskets, swords, and other weapons, stood closely round in a double line, and seemed to await impatiently the end of this shocking tragedy. This armed force, they told me, was intended not only to intimidate the unhappy victim in case the

[1] Several travellers have said, and I am inclined to believe it, that they force upon these wretched victims of superstition a kind of drink, which confuses the mind and prevents them from forming a correct notion of the dreadful torture to which they are being led. This beverage, they say, consists of a decoction of saffron. It is known that dried saffron pistils (*Crocus sativus*), taken in large quantities, cause violent and convulsive laughter, sometimes terminating in death.—DUBOIS.

terror of her approaching death might induce her to run away, but also to overawe any persons who might be moved by a natural feeling of compassion and sympathy, and so tempted to prevent the accomplishment of the homicidal sacrifice.

At length, the *purohita* Brahmin gave the fatal signal. The poor widow was instantly divested of all her jewels, and dragged, more dead than alive, to the pyre. There she was obliged, according to custom, to walk three times round the pile, two of her nearest relatives supporting her by the arms. She accomplished the first round with tottering steps; during the second her strength wholly forsook her, and she fainted away in the arms of her conductors, who were obliged to complete the ceremony by dragging her through the third round. Then, at last, senseless and unconscious, she was cast upon the corpse of her husband. At that moment the air resounded with noisy acclamations. The Brahmins, emptying the contents of their vessels on the dry wood, applied their torches, and in the twinkling of an eye the whole pile was ablaze. Three times was the unfortunate woman called by her name. But, alas! she made no answer.

The last king of Tanjore, who died in 1801, left behind him four lawful wives. The Brahmins decided that two of these should be burnt with the body of their husband, and selected the couple that should have the preference. It would have been an everlasting shame to them and the grossest insult to the memory of the deceased had they hesitated to accept this singular honour. Being fully convinced, moreover, that no means would be spared to induce them to sacrifice themselves either willingly or unwillingly, they made a virtue of necessity and seemed perfectly ready to yield to the terrible lot which awaited them.

The necessary preparations for the obsequies were completed in a single day.

Three or four leagues from the royal residence a square pit of no great depth, and about 12 to 15 feet square, was excavated. Within it was erected a pyramid of sandalwood, resting on a kind of scaffolding of the same wood. The posts which supported it were so arranged that they could easily be removed, and would thereby cause the whole structure to collapse suddenly. At the four corners of the pit were placed huge

brass jars filled with ghee, to be thrown on the wood in order to hasten combustion.

The following was the order of the procession as it wended its way to the pyre. It was headed by a large force of armed soldiers. Then followed a crowd of musicians, chiefly trumpeters, who made the air ring with the dismal sound of their instruments. Next came the king's body borne in a splendid open palanquin, accompanied by his *guru*, his principal officers, and his nearest relatives, who were all on foot and wore no turbans in token of mourning. Among them was also a large number of Brahmins. Then came the two victims, each borne on a richly decorated palanquin. They were loaded, rather than decked, with jewels. Several ranks of soldiers surrounded them to preserve order and to keep back the great crowds that flocked in from every side. The two queens were accompanied by some of their favourite women, with whom they occasionally conversed. Then followed relatives of both sexes, to whom the victims had made valuable presents before leaving the palace. An innumerable multitude of Brahmins and persons of all castes followed in the rear.

On reaching the spot where their untimely fate awaited them, the victims were required to perform the ablutions and other ceremonies proper on such occasions; and they went through the whole of them without hesitation and without the least sign of fear. When, however, it came to walking round the pile, it was observed that their features underwent a sudden change. Their strength seemed wellnigh to forsake them in spite of their obvious efforts to suppress their natural feelings. During this interval the body of the king had been placed on the top of the pyramid of sandalwood. The two queens, still wearing their rich attire and ornaments, were next compelled to ascend the pile. Lying down beside the body of the deceased prince, one on the right and the other on the left, they joined hands across the corpse. The officiating Brahmins then recited in a loud tone several *mantrams*, sprinkled the pile with their *tirtam* or holy water, and emptied the jars of ghee over the wood, setting fire to it at the same moment. This was done on one side by the nearest relative of the king, on another by his *guru*, on others by leading Brahmins. The flames quickly spread, and the props being removed, the whole

structure collapsed, and in its fall must have crushed to death the two unfortunate victims. Thereupon all the spectators shouted aloud for joy. The unhappy women's relatives standing around the pile then called to them several times by name, and it is said that, issuing from amidst the flames, the word *Yen*? (What?) was heard distinctly pronounced. A ridiculous illusion, no doubt, of minds blinded by fanaticism; for it could never be believed that the unfortunate victims were at that moment in a condition to hear and to speak.

Two days after, when the fire was completely extinguished, they removed from amidst the ashes the remnants of the bones that had not been entirely consumed, and put them into copper urns, which were carefully sealed with the signet of the new king. Some time afterwards, thirty Brahmins were selected to carry these relics to Kasi (Benares) and to throw them into the sacred waters of the Ganges. It was arranged that, on their return from that holy city, they should receive valuable presents, upon producing authenticated certificates to the effect that they had really accomplished the journey, and had faithfully executed the task entrusted to them. A portion of the bones was, however, reserved for the following purpose:—they were reduced to powder, mixed with some boiled rice, and eaten by twelve Brahmins. This revolting and unnatural act had for its object the expiation of the sins of the deceased—sins which, according to the popular opinion, were transmitted to the bodies of the persons who ate the ashes, and were tempted by money to overcome their repugnance for such disgusting food. At the same time, it is believed that the filthy lucre thus earned can never be attended with much advantage to the recipients. Amidst the ashes, too, were picked up small pieces of melted gold, the remains of the ornaments worn by the princesses.

Presents were given to the Brahmins who presided at the obsequies, and to those who had honoured the ceremonies with their presence. To the king's *guru* was given an elephant. The three palanquins which had served to carry the corpse of the king and the two victims to the pile were given away to the three leading Brahmins. The presents distributed among the other Brahmins consisted of cloths and of money amounting to nearly twenty-five thousand rupees. Several bags of small coin were

also scattered among the crowds on the roadside as the funeral procession was on its way to the pyre. Finally, twelve houses were built and presented to the twelve Brahmins who had the courage to swallow the powdered bones of the deceased, and by that means to take upon themselves all their sins.

A few days after the funeral the new king made a pilgrimage to a temple a few leagues distant from his capital. He there took a bath in a sacred tank, and was thus purified of all the uncleanness that he had contracted during the various ceremonies of mourning. On this occasion also presents were given to the Brahmins and to the poor of other castes.

On the spot where the deceased king and his two unhappy companions had been consumed a circular mausoleum was erected, about 12 feet in diameter, surmounted by a dome. The reigning prince visits it from time to time, prostrates himself humbly before the tombs, and offers sacrifices to the manes of his predecessor and to those of his worthy and saintly spouses.

Crowds of devotees also repair thither to offer up vows and sacrifices to the new divinities, and to implore their help and protection in the various troubles of life.

In the year 1802 I heard accounts of a great number of so-called miracles performed through their intercession.

It is only after long and serious reflection on the many eccentricities and inconsistencies of the human mind that one can look without astonishment upon the deplorable scenes of which a few of the main features have just been described. It is indeed unaccountable how these Brahmins, who are so scrupulous and attach so much importance to the life of the most insignificant insect, and whose feelings are excited to pity and indignation at the very sight of a cow being slaughtered, can, with such savage cold-bloodedness and wicked satisfaction, look upon so many weak and innocent human beings, incited by hypocritical and barbarous inducements, being led with affected resignation to a punishment so cruel and undeserved. I leave to others the task of explaining these inconceivable contradictions, if, that is to say, it is possible to assign any reasons for such superstitious fanaticism, whose characteristic feature is to suppress all natural and rational sentiment.

CHAPTER XX

Adoption.—Rules regarding the Partition of Property.

WHEN a Brahmin finds that he has no male issue, whether by reason of the barrenness of his wife or through the untimely death of all the sons he has had by her, he is permitted, nay bound, by the rules of his caste to procure a son by means of adoption, in order that he may, at least fictitiously, fulfil *the great debt to his ancestors*, namely, the propagation of a direct line of posterity. Although marriage constitutes the perfect state of man, this perfection is nevertheless deficient when a man does not leave a son behind him to perform his obsequies; and this defect alone, according to Hindu writers, is quite sufficient to deprive him of happiness in the next world.

This notion prevails so strongly among the Hindus that I have known barren women not only consenting to their husbands taking other wives, but even earnestly advising them to do so, and helping them in their quest. There is not one of them, however, who is not fully alive to the annoyances and discomforts to which she is exposing herself by thus introducing as her rival another woman, who must naturally, by her youthfulness and fecundity, soon become an object more beloved than herself by their common husband.

It has already been said that polygamy is tolerated among the ruling classes only; and when we find other women besides the lawful wife living in the families of private individuals of high caste, especially among the Brahmins, either they are living there, as already stated, with the consent of the lawful wife, or else they are merely hired concubines. However, a husband who has had no male issue by his wife,

being fully alive to the unpleasant consequences arising from a second marriage, almost invariably prefers to have recourse to the system of adoption.

A Brahmin generally chooses from among his own relatives the child that he wishes to legally adopt as his son; and if perchance he finds nobody in his own family worthy of the honour, he applies to some poor fellow of his own caste who is burdened with many children. So long as the adoptive father is rich, he is sure not to meet with a refusal [1].

The adopted son renounces wholly and for ever all his claims to the property and succession of his natural father, and acquires the sole right to the heritage of his father by adoption. The latter is bound to bring him up, to feed him, and to treat him as his own son; to have the ceremony of *upanayana*, or the triple cord, performed for him, and to see him married. The adopted son, in his turn, is obliged to take care of his adoptive father in his old age and in sickness, just as if he were his natural father, and to *preside at his obsequies*. On the death of his adoptive father he enters into full possession of his inheritance—assets as well as liabilities. Should there be any property left, he enjoys it; but if, on the other hand, there are debts, he is bound to pay them. He is, moreover, by his adoption admitted into the *gothram* or family stock of the adopter, and is considered to have left that in which he was born [2].

It is only natural that, in a country where everything is performed with so much solemnity, an event of such importance should be attended with great ceremonies. The following are a few of the most important:—

The first thing to be done, as might be expected, is to select an auspicious day. They then adorn the portals of the house with *toranams* (garlands of leaves) and put up a temporary *pandal*. The festivities open with a sacrifice to Vigneshwara and the nine planets; and the other preparatory ceremonies already described are likewise gone through. The adoptive father and mother take their seats on the small daïs raised in the middle of the *pandal*.

[1] The strict rule is that the natural mother of the adopted son must be a marriageable relative of the adoptive father. Nowadays, however, a Hindu is allowed to adopt any boy provided he be of the same caste.—ED.

[2] *Gothram* literally means 'cow-shed.'—ED.

The mother of the child is presented with a new garment and with a hundred or a hundred and fifty pieces of silver as her *nursing wages*. Then, with her son in her arms, she approaches the adoptive father, who asks her in a loud and distinct voice, in presence of the whole assembly, whether she delivers over her child to be brought up. To this she answers in the same tone that she does deliver the child to be brought up. This utterance bears a comprehensive meaning. It is a formal intimation that she gives up her son not as a slave who is sold, but to be looked upon and treated as a child of the family into which he is about to enter[1].

They next bring in a dish filled with water into which some powdered saffron has been thrown. The *purohita* blesses this mixture by muttering *mantrams* and performing certain ceremonies. Then the mother of the child[2] hands the dish to the adoptive father, and at the same time, invoking fire to bear witness to the deed, she thrice repeats the following words:—'*I give up this child to you; I have no more right over him.*' The adoptive father then takes the child, and seating him on his knees, addresses the relatives present as follows:—'This child has been given to me, after fire has been invoked as a witness of the gift: and I, by this saffron water which I will now drink, promise to bring him up as my own son. From this moment he is entitled to the enjoyment of all his rights over my property, sharing, at the same time, the burden of my debts.'

After these words, he and his wife pour out a small quantity of the saffron water in the hollow of their right hands and drink it up. They then pour a little into the hand of the adopted child and make him also drink it, adding: 'We have admitted this child into our *gothram*, and we incorporate him into it.'

[1] Generally a boy is adopted when he is fit for the *upanayana* ceremony; and both ceremonies are performed simultaneously.—ED.

[2] It is the mother of the child who plays the most important part in this ceremony; the father being present there only as a mere formality. The reason is that in India all the children are supposed to belong by right to the mother. Should a married man, or a man living in concubinage, happen to separate himself, for some cause or other, from his wife or concubine, the latter would be entitled to take away all their children, without the possibility of the slightest opposition on the part of the father.—DUBOIS.

This is the last event in the ceremony of adoption. I have remarked that at the age of six months Hindu children are solemnly invested with the girdle or waist-string, to which, six or seven years later, is attached a small piece of cloth intended to cover the private parts. Should the adopted child be already wearing this string, they break it and supply him with a fresh one; but should he have none, they at once begin to invest him with it with all the usual ceremonies. It is by this act that his incorporation into the *gothram* or family clan of his new father is sanctified.

The festivities, as usual, wind up with a repast and the distribution of betel and presents to the guests.

The use of saffron water on this occasion accounts for the fact that an adopted child generally receives the appellation of the '*saffron-water child*' of such a one[1], a term which, it should be added, has nothing offensive about it.

The ceremony of adoption is almost identical among the Sudras and the Brahmins, with this one difference, that among the Sudras the adoptive father and his wife pour the saffron water on to the feet of the adopted child with one hand, and catch and drink it with the other.

An adoptive father may choose not only a child of tender years, but even an adult, should that suit his taste and purpose better.

Persons whose means do not permit them to perform the ceremony of adoption with so much pomp and circumstance, have a simpler and more expeditious mode of performing it. It is deemed sufficient if the mother of the child and the adopted father invoke fire to witness their mutual bargain. Dwellers on the banks of the Ganges need simply call to witness, in such a case, the waters of that sacred river.

In whatever fashion the ceremony of adoption be performed, the adopted child no longer retains any right either to the property or the heritage of his natural father, nor can he be held answerable for the debts which the latter may leave at his death.

[1] The Hindus take a pleasure in giving each other nicknames, some of which are very insulting indeed. They generally choose such names with reference to some mental or bodily defect of the person concerned, or on account of some dishonourable act imputed to him.—DUBOIS.

The adoption of girls is rare, although instances of it are not wanting.

The work* from which I have extracted these particulars relating to adoption also furnishes a solution of some of the difficulties that arise in certain cases with regard to the division of property. The little that it contains on the subject seems to me sufficiently interesting.

We find there laid down the supposititious case of a man who, after adopting a son, has subsequently had, contrary to his expectation, six children by his legitimate wife, namely, four boys and two girls. The father and two of the boys die; one of the girls and the adopted son are married; there remain two boys and a girl who are unmarried; and provision must also be made for the subsistence of the widow. The question is, How, in such a case, ought the property devolved by succession to be divided?

The answer given is to the following effect:—*First*, the amount necessary for the funeral expenses of the deceased father ought to be set apart, and the money required for the marriage of the three unmarried children ought to be placed in the hands of a trustworthy executor.

Secondly, the property that remains after these amounts have been set aside shall be divided into six shares. The adopted son shall take for himself a share and a half, and the remainder shall be equally divided among the brothers and the mother. Should the mother be dead, the property is divided only into five shares and a half, unless all the brothers, with common accord, relinquish on behalf of their unmarried sister, with the object of providing her with jewels, that part of the inheritance which would have fallen to the mother, who is perfectly at liberty, before her death, to dispose of this share in favour of her daughters, without the slightest objection being raised thereto by the sons. If she has not done so, the brothers alone, independently of the sisters, set apart a reasonable amount for a decent funeral, and divide equally among themselves whatever remains of her property.

This decision of the Brahmins, while in accordance with the general custom of the country, which entitles sons to equal shares of the paternal property, and excludes the daughters by merely granting them a dowry, departs from it in so far

as mothers have no share whatever in the property of their husbands, their sons being conjointly bound to provide for their maintenance during their lives.

Should a man, by reason of the barrenness of his first wife, marry a second, and the latter have a son, all the father's property belongs exclusively to this son; the first wife, after the death of the common husband, can claim nothing from the estate: but the son is bound to provide for her maintenance in a decent manner, and to meet all the expenses of her funeral. If the first wife does not choose to continue to live with the second, the relatives meet together and arrange for the allotment to her of a sufficient income according to her condition in life.

A certain man, finding that his first wife was barren, married a second, then a third; but it so happened that these two, like the first, were barren also, and the man, therefore, died without issue. The deceased had an elder and a younger brother, besides several cousins, sons of his paternal uncles. None of these, however, had been living with him. They had long before divided their family property, and each was living separately. The question arises, Who ought to be regarded as the rightful heir of the deceased? The answer given is, that the rightful heir is the younger brother, because, being the youngest of the family, to him, according to the custom of the country, belongs the right of presiding at the obsequies—a right which carries with it the heirship. He thereby becomes the head of the family and the master of the house. It is he, therefore, who is obliged to provide for the maintenance of the three widows left by his brother. Should any one of the three choose to return to her father's house, she would be at perfect liberty to do so, and even to take away with her all the jewels given to her by her deceased husband. Furthermore, the family council would determine upon the allowance which her brother-in-law, as the heir to her husband's property, would be bound to make to her to enable her to subsist. If she elected to remain in her deceased husband's house and to have an establishment of her own there, she could not be refused permission; but in that case her brother-in-law would not be under the necessity of assigning her any considerable income; and she would be obliged, at her own risk,

to supplement such income with alms. It is well known, however, that such a mode of living has nothing disgraceful about it, since begging is one of the six privileges of the Brahmins. Finally, the brother-in-law is bound to bear all the expenses of the funerals of the three widows should they happen to die before him.

If the deceased husband be the youngest of the brothers, the elder brother would then become the sole inheritor, and on him would devolve all the rights and obligations connected with the heritage. In the absence of brothers, the nearest relative on the father's side becomes sole heir.

In cases where doubts arise as to the transmission of the property, the relatives are called in to decide the matter according to the prevailing custom of the country, or as justice may dictate to them. But very often the partiality prevailing in these family councils turns the scale in favour of the one who is able to purchase the support of the others. The collusions, intrigues, and acts of injustice practised on such occasions are without number, and tend to throw discredit on an institution which owes its origin to truly patriarchal principles.

It may be observed from what has been already said that the right of inheritance and the duty of presiding at the obsequies are inseparable one from the other. When, therefore, a wealthy man dies without direct descendants, a crowd of remote relatives appear to dispute with each other the honour of conducting the funeral rites. The contest is occasionally so tumultuous and prolonged that the body of the deceased is in a state of complete putrefaction before a definite settlement of these many pretensions is arrived at. On the other hand, on the death of a needy man burdened with debts, the survivors take every possible care to disprove near relationship.

There is another rule regarding succession among the Hindus, which will, doubtless, appear to us highly incompatible with the true principles of justice.

A father dies, leaving several male children, who, from carelessness or some other cause, do not trouble themselves about the legal partition of the paternal inheritance. One of them, by his industry and diligence, acquires wealth, while

the others, leading a debauched and idle life, become seriously involved in debt. These, after a life of dissipation and wandering from place to place, learn at last that their brother, by his industry and good conduct, has amassed a brilliant fortune. They at once hasten to him and call upon him to share with them the property he has acquired by the sweat of his brow, and moreover render him jointly responsible for the debts resulting from their disorderly habits[1]. The creditors themselves, too, have the right to recover from him by law what is due to them from his brothers. More than this, should brothers, who neglect to divide their family property, die before such partition has been actually effected, the same community of property and of debts holds good among their children, and it descends from generation to generation so long as the property remains undivided. It is by no means rare to see cousins of the third and fourth degree engaged in lawsuits concerning rights of succession dating back from time immemorial. Neither is it an uncommon thing to see the richer members of a family coerced by the poorer ones to admit the latter to a share of their hard-earned fortune, while these burden them with their poverty and their debts.

In a country where nearly everything is regulated by custom, and where the usages are as many and as various as the different provinces, these lawsuits in connexion with the partition of properties are an endless source of chicanery. There is one advantage, however, from a social point of view, arising from this singular system, namely, that it gives such relatives as are liable to be affected by the law of partition the right to watch over each other's conduct, and to restrain the debauchery and extravagance of those whose misconduct might involve them all in distress.

The appointment of a single heir among the male children

[1] In Madras a proposal was recently made by a Hindu member of the local Legislature to introduce a Bill to secure for every individual of an 'undivided' Hindu family 'the gains of his learning.' The Bill, however, has not yet been passed. At present, when a claim is made to 'the gains of learning' of one of the members of an 'undivided' family, those who prefer the claim invariably attempt to prove that the member to whose gains they lay claim was educated out of the undivided family property, and that therefore the undivided members have a right to share his gains.—ED.

of a family is a thing unknown in India. The brothers divide the paternal property equally, to the exclusion of the sisters, who have no share whatever in it. The father does not even possess the privilege of treating one of his sons more generously than the rest[1]. The Hindus cannot conceive how a father could despoil several of his children in order to enrich one of them in particular; and they are simply astounded when they are told that this custom prevails in many countries of Europe. But what makes us still more ridiculous in their eyes is that this favoured heir should very often be, not the son who distinguishes himself above the rest by his filial devotion, his virtues, and his talents, but one who by chance happens to be the first-born, and who may perhaps be the most foolish and vicious of the whole family.

[1] There is nothing, however, to prevent a father from allotting the whole or any portion of his *self-acquired*, as opposed to his *ancestral* property, to any one of his sons, or disposing of it in any other way he pleases.—ED.

CHAPTER XXI

The Learning of the Brahmins.—Their Colleges.—Astronomy.—Astrology.—Magic.

It is certain that from the earliest times learning was cultivated by the Hindus. The Brahmins have always been, as it were, its depositaries, and have always considered it as belonging exclusively to themselves. They saw well enough what a moral ascendency knowledge would give them over the other castes, and they therefore made a mystery of it by taking all possible precautions to prevent other classes from obtaining access to it.

The question arises, Have they themselves systematically cultivated learning? Have they made any appreciable progress in its pursuit? This we must answer in the negative, if at least we are to compare what has come down to us from their ancient authors with the present conditions of instruction and learning amongst them. I do not believe that the Brahmins of modern times are, in any degree, more learned than their ancestors of the times of Lycurgus and Pythagoras. During this long space of time many barbarous races have emerged from the darkness of ignorance, have attained the summit of civilization, and have extended their intellectual researches almost to the utmost limits of human intelligence; yet all this time the Hindus have been perfectly stationary. We do not find amongst them any trace of mental or moral improvement, any sign of advance in the arts and sciences. Every impartial observer must, indeed, admit that they are now very far behind the peoples who inscribed their names long after them on the roll of civilized nations.

The learning which won for them so much respect and reverence from their fellow-countrymen, and which rendered them so famous in the eyes of foreign nations, among whom

ignorance and superstition then prevailed, was connected with astronomy, astrology, and magic. Several authors have given details of their astronomical system, and it is fully explained in the *Asiatic Researches.* Moreover, Father Pons, a former Jesuit missionary in the Carnatic, had, long before this, discussed it in a highly interesting treatise published in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences,* and likewise we find it discussed in the *Histoire Générale de Tous les Peuples* by the Abbé Lambert. It is from these sources that the famous astronomer Bailly derived almost all that he has written on Hindu Astronomy.

The accuracy of the investigations of the learned Jesuit missionary in this direction has been since confirmed; but in the same work he speaks of the schools and of what he calls the 'academies' of India. It seems to me that he is rather too favourably impressed with these latter institutions, and is far too profuse in his eulogies on the methods of teaching and the course of studies in vogue in the so-called academies.

As a matter of fact, no comparison whatever can be drawn between schools in India and those in Europe. The system pursued in the former of causing everything to be learnt by rote is, in my opinion, essentially wrong, and tends to prolong indefinitely the course of study. Moreover, there is no regular plan of instruction, and there is no public institution which is, properly speaking, devoted to the diffusion of knowledge. It is true that in certain large towns, or in the precincts of some of the more important temples, Brahmins who are really learned, or who pretend to be so, impart the knowledge which they possess—some gratuitously and others for payment; still, for all this, instruction is carried on without any definite system or any attempt at discipline—elements absolutely necessary to give to these studies a character of permanence and uniformity. Let a youth learn who has a mind to do so, and as long as he chooses: this seems to be their guiding principle. There is nothing in these institutions which is calculated to stimulate the teachers or to encourage the pupils. There are no public examinations to undergo, no degrees to aspire to, no prizes to be won; in fine, no special privilege or advantage of any importance is held out to students who distinguish themselves by their attainments. It is true that those who have a reputation

for learning are esteemed by the public, but empty reputation without any substantial benefit is not a motive sufficiently powerful to stimulate a Brahmin. It would be well enough if learned Hindus were frequently encouraged by the liberality of their princes, but the latter are too deeply immersed in the enjoyment of material pleasures to be able to appreciate the real value of learning and to take the trouble to patronize it[1]. Accordingly one seldom comes across educated Brahmins who owe their knowledge to one of these public schools. They are, in fact, entirely beholden for it to the exertions of their parents and to private tuition. Thus it is that learning is almost always transmitted from family to family, from generation to generation, and becomes, so to say, hereditary.

So much, then, for the course of study, the universities, and the *littérateurs* of India.

The Hindu system of astronomy being, as I have said before, sufficiently well known, I shall refrain from repeating here what others have said on the subject. But I shall dwell at some length on the other two branches of their scientific knowledge, namely, astrology and magic.

ASTROLOGY.

Astrology, together with the silly notions which originate from it, has at all times exercised a great influence over the nations of the world, civilized as well as uncivilized. In Europe the appearance of a comet or a total eclipse formerly spread the greatest terror in the minds of the multitude, who looked upon these celestial phenomena as the forerunners of some public calamity; and even at the present day these chimerical fears still exercise some influence over the imagination of the ignorant and superstitious.

The influence of the stars, scrutinized with the eyes of reason, need not be looked upon altogether as an idle imagining; and there is doubtless a happy medium to be observed between the widely divergent opinions of authors concerning the action,

[1] Education on European lines is now widely extended, of course, but the diffusion of Hindu knowledge and the study of Sanskrit, its principal medium, is still pretty much as the Abbé describes it. It is only just to observe, however, that it has been, and is, more largely patronized by Hindu princes than the Abbé implies. —ED.

more or less direct, more or less limited, exercised by the stars over the vegetable and animal kingdoms of this earth of ours. Be this as it may, however, no other nation appears to have carried its astrological notions to such extremes of folly as the Hindus. With their wonted exaggeration in all things, it is only natural that they should entertain wild ideas about a science which opens so vast a sphere to the imagination. All the rubbish they have written on this subject would certainly be too tedious to read. I will, therefore, content myself with referring briefly to a few of the important principles on which their so-called science of astrology rests.

Each planet in turn is supposed to exercise its influence during the space of a year. The ruling planet is attended by another, which plays the part of a minister. The latter assumes in the following year the supreme functions of the former; and so on year after year.

Some of these planets are beneficent, others the reverse. The Moon, Mercury, Jupiter, and Venus are of the former order. Under their sway everything thrives: men live happily and are blessed with abundance; the fertile fields yield rich harvests, and the fruitful trees bear abundantly. The Sun, Mars, and Saturn, on the other hand, have a tendency to cause evil to animate as well as to inanimate nature. Their reign is, therefore, almost always disastrous. Men are oppressed with sickness; they attain success in nothing; they experience only troubles and disappointments: moreover, the rains hold off, the soil becomes unfruitful, famine and misery everywhere prevail. When, however, an unpropitious planet has for its attendant minister a planet of an opposite character, and vice versa, the good one counteracts and counterbalances, at least to a certain degree, the evil influence of the other. Thus one can expect to enjoy unalloyed happiness only during those years when two benign planets hold their sway at one and the same time. Similarly, one must dread continual misfortunes when both planets have an evil inclination to harass unfortunate mankind.

There are four principal clouds which yield rain, and each in its turn discharges this duty for the space of one year. Their names are *Samvarta, Avarta, Pushkala, Drona.* The first and the last are favourably disposed towards mankind, and yield

copious showers. *Avarta* and *Pushkala*, on the other hand, produce nothing but storms and hurricanes, and are sparing of the rain which refreshes and fertilizes the soil.

The frequency of rain depends also to a great extent on the good or bad will of seven elephants. Each of these is known by its own name, and each in turn is charged with the annual duty of carrying water to the clouds. Four of them display great activity in the discharge of their duty, and supply the clouds with an ample provision of rain. But the other three acquit themselves very carelessly of their duty during their terms of service; consequently the ground remains parched up, and scarcity prevails.

Seven snakes, each also bearing a particular name, exercise in turn for the space of one year supreme authority over all species of snakes.

The snake *Ananta*, the first one, is the most powerful of all, and supports the earth on its head. The year of its reign is considered unhappy, inasmuch as snakes are then extremely venomous, and their bite invariably proves fatal.

The reign of the snake *Karkataka* is equally unhappy.

The remaining five are by no means equally mischievous. It is seldom that persons are bitten by snakes while these are in power; and should a person be bitten, the bite does not prove fatal. The snake *Maha-Padma* particularly is the friend of men; it not only prevents other snakes from harming them, but also comes to their aid by sending the physician *Dhanmantari* to cure such as may have been accidentally bitten.

By the combination of the twelve signs of the Zodiac with the planets and with the star which is in the ascendant on each day of the moon, Hindu astrologers believe themselves capable of telling the secrets as well as the future events of life.

The Sun remains thirty days in each of the signs of the Zodiac; the Moon, two days and a quarter; Mars and Mercury, a month and a half; Jupiter, one year; Venus, two years and a half; Saturn, one year and a half.

Each sign of the Zodiac has, besides, two stars and a quarter, which are assigned to it from among the twenty-seven constellations or stars of the lunar month.

By comparing all these phenomena, and by joining, in regular order, certain words with the different signs of the Zodiac, they are enabled to know the past, the present, and the future, and to

recover things that have been lost or stolen. The coincidence of these words is, for this purpose, combined with the sign of the Zodiac, the planet, the star, and the time of the day or night at which the astrologer is consulted.

By the same means it is possible to find out, not only the place wherein a stolen object is secreted, but also the sex and the caste of the thief. They are also able to ascertain whether or not the stolen or lost article will be recovered, according as the sign, the planet, and the star which correspond to the time at which the consultation takes place are favourable or the reverse.

They discover in the same way whether a person who has been long absent is dead or alive; whether he is sick or in good health; whether he is at liberty or in prison; whether he will return or not.

But one of the most important combinations calculated is that relating to birth. In fact, according to the Hindus, the future lot of men is supposed to depend on the sign of the Zodiac and the star under which they are born. This is what they call *lagnam*. It is supposed that each of the twelve signs prevails over daily occurrences during a fixed interval of time. Thus, for instance, the sign Aries (the Ram) prevails for two hours; Taurus (the Bull) for two hours and a quarter; Gemini (the Twins) for two hours and a half; and so on. Again, the sign which corresponds to the moment of birth is termed *Janma-lagnam*; and by combining it with the planet and the star of the day, they ascertain beyond a doubt whether the child is born to be happy or unhappy.

Of the seven days of the week, three are held to be unlucky, namely, Sunday, Tuesday, and Saturday. On these days no important business ought to be undertaken, no journey begun.

Of the twenty-seven stars of each lunar month, seven are reputed to be more or less unlucky; and everything undertaken on the days on which these appear is attended with disastrous results.

The rest of the science is based on similar considerations.

MAGIC.

Magic, that art which gives shrewd people such influence over fools, seems to have found a favourite abode in the

Peninsula of India. Certainly, in this respect, India has no reason to be envious of the ancient Thessaly or of the city of Colchis, famous for the enchantments of Circe and Medea. True, I am not aware that Hindu sorcerers have retained the power of causing the moon, whether willing or not, to come down from the height of the firmament; but short of this, there is nothing which Hindu magicians are incapable of doing. Thus there is not a single Hindu who does not, during the whole course of his life, dream about sorcery and witchcraft. Nothing in this country happens by chance or from natural causes. Obstacles of every kind, disappointments, unlucky incidents, diseases, premature deaths, barrenness of women, miscarriages, diseases among cattle; in fine, all the scourges to which human beings are exposed are attributed to the occult and diabolical machinations of some wicked enchanter hired by an enemy. Should a Hindu, at the time he is visited by any calamity, happen to be at variance with any one of his neighbours, the latter is immediately suspected and accused of having had recourse to magic to harm him. The accused, of course, never puts up patiently with an imputation so invidious. Anger is engendered, and the flame of discord grows hotter and hotter, until some serious consequences result from this new development.

If the immense progress in enlightenment made by the most civilized nations of Europe has not yet been able to completely eradicate these absurd prejudices, if the rural parts of Europe are still full of people who believe in sorcerers and in their magical charms, and if in the public places of our towns one still sees crowds of impostors in wretched garb professing to furnish those around them with the favours of fortune, is it to be wondered at that in a country like India, plunged as it is in the darkness of gross ignorance and superstition, the belief in magic is carried to the very last point? Thus it is that at every step one meets with batches of these soothsayers and sorcerers distributing good luck to all comers, and for a consideration unfolding to the view of the rich and of the poor the secrets of their destinies.

But these sorcerers of the lowest rank, whose whole stock-in-trade consists of a large fund of impudence, are not held in much dread. Others there are whose diabolical art knows no bounds,

and who are initiated into the most profound secrets of magic. To inspire love or hatred; to introduce a devil into the body of any one, or to expel it; to cause the sudden death of an enemy, or to bring on him an incurable disease; to produce contagious diseases among cattle, or to preserve them against such contagion; to lay bare the closest secrets; to restore stolen or lost articles, &c.: all these are mere bagatelles to such men. The very sight of a person who is reputed to be gifted with such enormous power inspires terror.

These professors of magic are often consulted by persons who wish to avenge themselves on some enemy by means of witchcraft. Their help is also sought by sick folk who are persuaded that their disease has been caused by the casting of some magical spell upon them, and who wish to recover their health by throwing a counter-spell upon those who caused the disease by such means.

The Hindus have several books which treat *ex professo* of all these follies of the magic art. The principal and most ancient of them is the fourth Veda, called the *Atharva-Veda*[1]. The Brahmins would have it believed that this book has been lost; but it is known that it still exists, and that they keep it in concealment with even greater care than they do the other three. In fact, the magicians being everywhere dreaded and hated, the Brahmins have good reason to conceal everything that may lead to the suspicion of their being initiated in the secret dealings of these impostors. It is, however, certain that magic occupies one of the first places in the list of sciences of which these great men profess to be the sole inheritors[2]. There can be no doubt

[1] *Atharva-Veda* is a collection of formulae to avert the consequences of mistakes or mishaps in sacrifices. *Atharvan*, Brahmana's eldest son, identified with Angirasa, is the author of this Veda, which belongs to a later period than the other three Vedas. This Veda is a collection of original hymns mixed up with incantations. It has no direct relation to mere rituals or sacrifices. The recitation of this Veda is considered to confer longevity, to cure diseases, to obtain success in love or gaming, to effect the ruin of enemies, and to secure the reciter's own prosperity.—ED.

[2] It should be remarked that if the Hebrews and the various other peoples, whom Holy Writ represents as being addicted to these abominable superstitions, did not actually borrow them from the Hindus, they must both at least have copied the system from the same sources. We are aware of the extensive reputation enjoyed by magicians and soothsayers among the children of Israel, who were strictly warned by God, through Moses, against

that their ancestors cultivated the art from time immemorial; and it is not likely that the successors would have neglected so good an example and allowed the practice to fall into disuse. Many Brahmins, moreover, in spite of the restrictions imposed upon them, are known to have made a special study of this mysterious book. Besides, do not their religious sacrifices and their *mantrams* bear a great resemblance to magical formulae and conjurings? Furthermore, do not the marvellous effects which they are supposed to produce, and the power ascribed to them of counteracting the will even of the gods themselves, place them on a par with the chimerical attributes which the vulgar mind ascribes to enchantments?

I happen to have come across a Hindu book treating of the subject in hand, which perhaps few Europeans have yet heard of. It is called the *Agrushada Parikshai*. The passages which I will here extract from it will never make anybody a sorcerer, but it strikes me that they may not be wholly uninteresting to those who like to meditate on the aberrations and follies of the human mind.

The author begins by investigating the extent of a magician's power. Such power is enormous. A magician is the dispenser of both good and evil; but is more frequently inclined by natural malevolence to do evil rather than good. Nothing is easier for him than to afflict anybody with sicknesses, such as fever, dropsy, epilepsy, stricture, palsy, madness; and, in fine, diseases of all species. But all this is a mere trifle compared with what his art can otherwise do! It is capable of completely destroying an army besieging a city, and also of causing the sudden death of the commander of a besieged fortress and of all its inhabitants, and so forth.

The Mahomedans in India, being quite as superstitious as the natives of the country, are no less infatuated with the power of magic. It is a well-known fact that the last Mussulman prince who reigned in Mysore, the fanatical and superstitious Tippu Sultan, during his last war, in which he lost his kingdom and his life, engaged the services of the most celebrated magicians of his own country and of neighbouring provinces,

consulting such men (Leviticus xix. 31, xx. 6). Saul, who had vainly tried to exterminate or expel them, was weak enough to have recourse to the enchantments of the witch of Endor.—DUBOIS.

in order that they might employ all the resources of their art in destroying by some efficacious operation the English army which was then advancing to besiege his capital, and which he found himself utterly incapable of repelling by force of arms. In this difficult and critical position the magicians very humbly acknowledged their powerlessness; and to save the reputation of their craft they were obliged to maintain that their magical operations, so potent when directed against every other enemy, were utterly ineffectual against Europeans[1].

But if magic teaches the means of doing evil, it also affords the means of counteracting its pernicious effects. There is no magician so skilful but that others can be found more skilful than he, to destroy the evil effects of his enchantments and cause them to recoil with all their force upon himself or upon his clients. Apart from the direct influence exercised by themselves, the magicians also possess an ample collection of amulets and talismans, which are looked upon as efficacious against all sorcery and spells, and which are largely distributed, not without payment of course, amongst those who consult them. For instance, there are certain glass beads made magical by *mantrams*, different kinds of roots, and thin plates of copper engraved with unknown characters, strange words and uncouth figures. These amulets are always worn by Hindus, who, when protected by such talismans, believe themselves quite safe from all kinds of evil.

Secret remedies for inspiring illicit passion, for rekindling the flame of extinct love, and for reviving impaired virility, also fall within the province of these professors of magic, and form by no means the least lucrative part of their trade. It is to such men that a wife always applies when she wishes to reclaim her faithless husband or to prevent him from becoming so. Debauched gallants and lewd women also seek the help of love philtres to seduce or captivate the object of their passion.

I was not a little surprised to find in the book which I am now describing mention made of *incubi*. But these demons of India are much more mischievous than those of whom

[1] It is generally believed by the Hindus that such sorcerers and magicians are powerless against Governments—an ingenuous admission of *force majeure*!—ED.

the Jesuit Delrio speaks in his *Disquisitiones Magicae.* By the violence and persistence of their embraces they so tire out the women whom they visit at night under the form of a dog, a tiger, or some other animal, that the unfortunate creatures die of sheer lassitude and exhaustion.

Our author speaks at great length of the means best suited to enchant weapons. The effects which weapons so treated have the virtue of producing are in no way inferior to those caused by the famous *Durandal* (Orlando's enchanted sword) and by the spear of Argail, which in ancient times routed so many miscreants. The Hindu gods and giants in their wars against each other used no other weapons but these. Is there anything, for instance, that can be compared with the *Arrow of Brahma* or the *Arrow of the Serpent Capella?* The former is never shot without causing the destruction of a whole army; and the latter, launched in the midst of enemies, has the effect of causing them to drop down in a state of lethargy—an effect which, as one may well suppose, made singularly short work of those who were subjected to it.

There is not a secret of magic which this book does not teach us. It puts us in possession of the means of acquiring wealth and honour; of rendering barren women fruitful; of discovering, by merely rubbing the hands and eyes with some enchanted mixtures, treasures buried in the ground or hidden elsewhere; of acquiring invulnerability and the most formidable powers in war by means of bones carried on the person. Strange to say, the only thing which it does not reveal is the means of rendering oneself immortal.

It is not by entering into compact with the devil, as our magicians were erstwhile supposed to have done, that the magicians of India obtained the power of performing so many prodigies. These latter, indeed, are not the kind of people to run the risk of having their necks twisted in evil company of this sort. It is quite sufficient for a Hindu to become an expert in the black art if he receives a few private lessons from the *guru*, or master, of the adepts. It is this *guru* who guides him in the right way, who confers his powers upon him, and to whom he owes obedience. Should a god, a demon, or a spirit be so stubborn as to disregard the orders of the newly

initiated disciple, the latter has simply to repeat his injunction *in the name and from the feet of his guru.*

Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva themselves are subject to the commands of the magicians. There are, however, certain divinities who are invoked by preference. Among these the planets occupy the first place. The term *graha*, by which they are designated, signifies the *act of seizing*, that is, of laying hold of those whom they are enjoined by magical enchantments to torment. The next in order are the *bhoothams*, or the elements, each of which contains a destructive principle. Then come the *pretas* or spirits of dead bodies, the *pisachas* or *pisasus*—a term by which the Native Christians designate the devil; the female deities called *sakti*; *Kali*, the goddess of destruction; and *Marana Devi*, the goddess of death.

In order to call all these spirits into action, the magician has recourse to various mysterious ceremonies, *mantrams* and sacrifices. The sacrifices are the same as those already described, with a few trifling differences. For instance, the magician must be stark naked while he offers up these sacrifices to Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu; while, on the other hand, he must be decorously clad when such sacrifices are offered to Rama.

The flowers offered to the god invoked must be red; and, when the object is to produce the death of any person, the boiled rice offered up must be stained with blood, for which purpose a human victim, a young girl for choice, is sometimes slain[1].

We have already spoken of the grand virtue of *mantrams*; but it is especially in connexion with magic that they are most effective. *Mantrams* have such an influence over the gods, even of the very first rank, that they are quite unable to resist doing, either in the heavens, or in the air, or on earth, all that the magician requires of them.

Among the said *mantrams* there are some, called the fundamentals, whose effects are decisive and irresistible. They are composed of various strange monosyllables, harsh of sound and difficult to pronounce; such as *h'hom, h'rhum, sh'hrum, sho'rhim, ramaya, namaha.* This last word signifies 'respectful greeting.'

[1] Such a thing is unheard of nowadays.—ED.

The magician sometimes repeats these *mantrams* in a humble and supplicatory manner, loading with praises the god whom he invokes; but he quickly resumes his imperious tone, and exclaims as though in a vehement rage, 'Grasp it! Grasp it!' or 'Begone! Begone! If thou art willing to do what I ask of thee, well and good; if not, I command thee to do it in the name of such and such a god, in the name of the feet of my *guru*!' Whereupon the god cannot do otherwise than comply with the magician's demands without a murmur!

From the haughty and indecorous manner in which the Hindu magicians treat their good-natured deities, it may be judged that they are not the men to allow themselves to be frightened as easily as were the poor witches of Horace, Canidia and Sagana, who, it will be remembered, were put to terrified flight by a commonplace sound, resembling the bursting of an inflated bladder, made by the God of the Gardens, who had been troubled by the enchantments which they came to perform every night in the place entrusted to his keeping.

It is impossible to enumerate the various drugs, ingredients, and utensils that go to make up the stock-in-trade of an Indian magician. There are certain incantations, in the performance of which it is necessary to use the bones of sixty-four different animals—neither more nor less—and amongst them may be mentioned those of a man born on a Sunday which happens to be new-moon day, of a woman born on a Friday, the feet-bones of a Pariah, of a cobbler, of a Mahomedan, and of a European. If all these bones are mixed together, enchanted by *mantrams*, consecrated by sacrifices, and then buried in the house, or at the threshold of an enemy on a night that the stars show to be propitious, they will infallibly cause the enemy's death.

In the same way, should the magician, in the silence of the night, bury these bones at the four cardinal points of a hostile camp, and then, retiring to some distance, repeat seven times the *mantram* of defeat, the result will be that within seven days the whole encamped army will either disperse of itself or perish to the last man.

Thirty-two weapons, consecrated by the sacrifice of a human victim, will spread such dismay among a besieging army that a hundred of their opponents will appear to it as a thousand.

Sometimes a quantity of mud collected from sixty-four filthy places is kneaded together with hair, parings of nails, bits of leather, &c.,* and is then moulded into small figures, on the breasts of which the name of one's enemy is written. Certain words and *mantrams* are then repeated over these figures, which are also consecrated by sacrifices. No sooner is this done than the *grahas* or planets take possession of the person against whom such incantations are directed, and afflict him with a thousand ills.

These figures are sometimes pierced through and through with an awl, or are mutilated in various ways with the intention of killing or mutilating in the same manner the person who is the object of vengeance [1].

Sixty-four roots of different kinds of noxious plants are known among the magicians, and, when duly prepared with *mantrams* and sacrifices, become powerful weapons for covertly dealing fatal blows to obnoxious persons.

It must here be remarked that the profession of a magician is

[1] At all times and in all places the same ridiculous and barbarous means have sufficed to excite the imagination of the vulgar, the ignorant, and the superstitious. They were, are, and will be the same throughout the world. Thus Medea, in Ovid :—

'Per tumulos errat, passis discincta capillis,
Certaque de tepidis colligit ossa rogis;
Devovet absentes, simulacraque cerea fingit,
Et miserum tenues in iecur urget acus.'

The two witches of Horace who have just been mentioned also had, among their other magical apparatus, two figures, one of wool and the other of wax:

. . . . Maior
Lanea, quae poenis compesceret inferiorem:
Cerea suppliciter stabat, servilibus, utque
Iam peritura, modis.'

The fanatical Leaguers of France in the sixteenth century carried their superstitious practices to such extremes that they caused wax figures to be made representing Henry III and the King of Navarre. They pierced the different parts of these figures with thorns for the space of forty days, and on the fortieth day they struck them about the region of the heart, believing that they would thereby cause the death of the princes whom the images represented. In the year 1751 a pretended sorcerer named *Trois-échelles*, who was executed on the Place de Grève, declared during his examination that there existed in France three hundred thousand persons practising the same profession as himself. Possibly he exaggerated, but at all events, if historians eliminated from their records all the follies of men, they would certainly not have much left to relate.—DUBOIS.

not altogether free from danger. If the Hindus themselves are revengeful, their gods are also passably so. Again, the gods do not obey without some feeling of anger the orders given to them by a miserable mortal, and they sometimes punish in a very cruel and brutal manner the person who ventures to command them. Woe to him who commits the smallest error, or makes the slightest omission in the innumerable ceremonies that are obligatory under such circumstances! He is immediately crushed with the full weight of the mischief which he was preparing for others.

Then again, a magician is in constant danger from rivals who exercise the same trade, especially when his rivals are as skilful as himself, or maybe more so. For these may succeed in counteracting his charms, and in bringing upon his own head, or upon the heads of his clients, the whole weight of his evil machinations. Accordingly there exists, in appearance or in reality, an inveterate mutual hatred amongst this crowd of men who pretend to be the interpreters of destiny. Occasionally they are seen to bid defiance to each other, and to enter the lists in the presence of witnesses and arbitrators, whom they call upon to decide which of the two is the more skilful in his art. The test consists, for example, in having to lift from the ground a spell-bound object, such as a piece of straw, a wand, or a piece of money. The two antagonists, placing themselves at either side of and at an equal distance from the aforesaid object, pretend to approach it; but the *mantrams* which they utter, or the enchanted ashes which they sprinkle upon each other, have the effect of arresting their course. An invisible and irresistible force seems to drive them back; they try again and again to advance towards the object, but as often have to draw back. They redouble their efforts; convulsive movements agitate them; the sweat pours from them; they spit blood. At last one of them succeeds in getting hold of the spell-bound object, and he is proclaimed the victor.

Sometimes, again, one of the combatants is thrown violently upon the ground by the force of the *mantrams* of his antagonist. He then rolls about like one possessed, and finally remains for some time motionless, feigning unconsciousness. At last, however, he recovers the use of his senses, gets up apparently much fatigued and exhausted, and retires covered with shame and

confusion. A sickness of several days' duration is supposed to be the immediate result of his strenuous yet futile efforts.

It will, doubtless, be easily guessed that these pitiable fooleries are the outcome of a premeditated understanding between the shameless charlatans who practise them. But the multitude who pay for being treated to a spectacle of this kind, and who look upon the actors with fear and admiration, are fully persuaded that all their contortions are due to supernatural causes. It must, however, be admitted that these men go through their parts with really admirable skill and precision. On many an occasion they have been seen to perform sleight-of-hand tricks with such rare skill as to astonish persons of a much less credulous turn of mind than the Hindus[1].

[1] The magic art is still firmly believed in throughout India. However, the rules whereby magical powers can be acquired are so rigorous and difficult, and the consequences of any violation or infringement of them supposed to be so dangerous to the man who attempts to practise them, that only a very few ever become adepts. In all parts of the country men are to be seen who are said to have become mad on account of some violation of the prescribed ceremonies for the acquisition of the black art.—ED.

CHAPTER XXII

The Poetry of the Hindus.

FROM the very earliest times poetry has been very much in vogue with the Hindus, and it is still held in high regard by them. One is even inclined to believe that at first they had no other written language. Not one of their original ancient books is written in prose, or in the vulgar tongue—not even the books on medicine, which are said to be very numerous in the Sanskrit language.

We may naturally infer that the practice of writing in a style and idiom beyond the comprehension of the vulgar was mainly due to the artful precaution of the Brahmins, who found in it a sure means of excluding all other castes from participating in a knowledge of which they wished to retain a monopoly.

It is quite certain that all the Hindu books in prose are of modern origin. It is in verse that the eighteen Puranas, and other similar works, have been translated from the Sanskrit into Tamil, Telugu, and Canarese, and, I think, into all the other vernaculars of India.

Tamil poetry seems to have been chiefly cultivated by the Sudras; and even Pariahs have been the authors of various poems in that language. The Tamil poets, however, while imitating the form and style of Sanskrit poetry, have added so many rules of their own that it is difficult to excel in the writing of it.

Telugu and Canarese poetry is chiefly the work of Brahmins.

Having acquired some knowledge of the most important rules of Hindu prosody, which, I think, are the same in all the vernaculars of the country, Sanskrit not excepted, I will try to describe them briefly here. The subject seems to me likely to

interest philologists. I will, therefore, describe: (1) the different kinds of poetry; (2) the long and short quantities; (3) the different feet; (4) the different metres; (5) the method of rhyme; (6) the composition of verses; (7) the style of their poetry generally.

The Different Kinds of Poetry.

There are five kinds of poetry, namely, *padam, padyam, dwipada, dandaka, yakshakaram.* Some add to these another kind under the name of *padia*, but as this is, properly speaking, poetical prose, it is not generally considered as belonging to the province of poetry.

The *padam* includes not only the odes in honour of gods, princes, and other great personages, but also obscene and amorous ditties, sprightly dialogues between gods and goddesses, and other similar compositions, some of which are called *sringaram* (ornament), because they describe the beauty of women and their different methods of adornment.

The erotic songs are also called *sittinbam* (pleasures of the will). Of this sort there is an infinite variety. They are sung, for the most part, by religious mendicants when they go from house to house asking for alms. The more coarse and indecent they are, the better they suit the tastes of the hearers, whose generosity is manifested in proportion to the enjoyment derived from them.

The hymns in honour of the gods are called *kirthanam* (praise), a term which these compositions well deserve on account of the high-flown eulogies with which they are replete.

The word *padam* corresponds likewise to our strophe, stanza, or couplet.

Padyam includes the great poems composed in honour of gods and heroes. They are divided into stanzas. There are at least thirty different forms of these stanzas, which may be introduced and interspersed in the course of the same poem. The *padyams* are also used in compositions dealing with moral and satirical subjects. The Telugu poet Vemana and the Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar excelled in these two kinds of composition, of which I shall speak again at the end of the present chapter.

The species of poetry called *dwipada* (two feet) is not subject to very strict rules. It might be described as free improvisation, and is used in the recital of short stories and adventures.

It is unnecessary to enter into details about the other kinds of poetry; it is easy to conjecture what they are like from what has been already said.

LONG AND SHORT QUANTITIES.

Hindu verses, like those in Greek and Latin, are formed of feet, composed of letters long or short in quantity. From these long and short feet are formed hemistichs, or lines which, combined in their turn, form stanzas.

I have remarked that the feet are composed of *letters*, because in the Indian languages there are no such things as syllables. Every consonant carries its own vowel, which is incorporated with it. In several languages of India combinations such as *bra*, *pla*, &c., which we call syllables, are also written as one single letter.

The short letters are called *laghu-aksharam*, and the long ones *guru-aksharam*, in allusion, no doubt, to the slow and solemn gait of a Hindu *guru*. Even in ordinary writing they seldom fail to make a distinction between the long and short letters with their particular marks. This is scrupulously observed in pronunciation; and in verse it is quite indispensable.

In Hindu as well as in Greek and Latin poetry, a long letter is equivalent to two short, and two long to four short. Thus, the word *māta*, composed of two long letters, is equivalent to the word *iruvadu*, composed of four short ones. But there are letters which, though short in prose writing and in ordinary conversation, become long in verse by their position; thus the initial *a* in the word *aksharam*, though short generally, becomes long in versification, being placed before two consonants, *k* and *sha*. In the same manner the letter *ka*, though usually short, is long in such words as *karman*, *karnam*, &c., on account of the two consonants which follow it.

As I wished to know whether this rule admitted of that poetical licence of which we find some examples in the writings of the best Latin poets—that is, whether a final short letter could become long by position when the word which follows it

begins with two consonants—I questioned a Brahmin whom I had asked to explain to me the structure of Hindu versification. He had already seemed somewhat surprised at the facility with which I understood his explanations, and I noticed that his professorial tone and arrogant self-conceit were gradually diminishing. But when I asked this question he stood dumbfounded, and for a while stared me in the face without uttering a word. At length he answered: 'I wonder how such a thought could have occurred to you, knowing as you do so little as yet even of the rudimentary elements of our poetry.' I told him that the different kinds of poetry which were studied in my own country bore many resemblances to the poetry of India, and that the knowledge I had previously derived from the former had led me to ask this particular question. But his astonishment, instead of decreasing, grew still greater. He found it very difficult to understand how such sublime things could ever have entered the minds of foreigners, and how poets could be found elsewhere than in India. This absurd prejudice on his part easily impressed him with the idea that I was a person of wonderful mental penetration. One advantage which resulted from our conversation was that in future his conduct towards me became much more respectful.

As in Latin, the last letter or vowel of a Hindu verse may be of any quantity at pleasure; but in such cases the distinction must always be marked in accentuation.

In an idolatrous country everything necessarily tends towards superstition. The poets of India, therefore, hold some letters to be of good and others of ill omen. The *ambrosial* letters (*amritam*) come under the head of the former, while the poisonous letters (*visham*) belong to the latter class. This distinction, however, is not observed in the poems in praise of the gods, who are supposed to be beyond such influences. But in verses which concern simple mortals the case is very different. Particular care must be taken never to begin any verse addressed to them with a *visham* or unlucky letter. In the Telugu and Canarese languages, the letters *ke, ki, pe, pi, te, ti*, &c., are of this number, because these letters when written have the point turned downwards. On the other hand, the letters *ko, po, to*, &c., are considered to be lucky letters (*amritam*), because they have the point turned upwards.

THE FEET IN VERSE.

The feet are called *ganams*, and there are two kinds, the simple *ganams* and the *upaganams*. The first are eight in number, and are expressed by the word *mahajasanarayala*, made up of the first letters of the following:—(1) *maganam*, (2) *haganam*, (3) *jaganam*, (4) *saganam*, (5) *naganam*, (6) *raganam*, (7) *yaganam*, (8) *laganam*.

The first consists of three longs; the second, of a long and two shorts; the third, of a long between two shorts; the fourth, of two shorts and a long; the fifth, of three shorts; the sixth, of a short between two longs; the seventh, of a short and two longs; the eighth, of two longs and a short.

There are eight *upaganams* expressed by the word *gavahanagamanala*, made up likewise by the combination of the first letters of the following words:—(1) *gaganam*, composed of two longs; (2) *vaganam*, of a short and a long; (3) *haganam*, of a long and a short; (4) *nalam*, of four shorts; (5) *galam*, of two shorts; (6) *malagam*, of three longs and a short; (7) *nagam*, of three shorts and a long; (8) *latam*, of two longs and two shorts.

The Hindu poets discern a certain relation between the *ganams* and the *upaganams*, according to the effects which they are severally supposed to possess the faculty of producing. They are all under the protection of different planets; and according to the good or evil dispositions of these latter, they bring good or ill luck. Those under the auspices of the moon, which in India is the symbol of comfort and coolness, are favourable; but the case is just the reverse with those governed by the sun. It therefore follows that a piece of poetry must never begin with a malign *ganam*. The Hindu prosodies are very diffuse and wearisome on this subject.

THE DIFFERENT METRES.

The lines, properly speaking, of verses are formed of *ganams* and *upaganams*, and are called *padams* or *charanams*, words which signify literally *feet*. They may be compared to the hemistichs or lines of pentameter verse in Latin, or to the lines of ten and twelve syllables in French and English. The variety

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of *padams* depends on the number of *ganams* they contain; some having three, five, seven, or more.

In certain *padams* any of the *ganams* may be used, and these latter may be varied at pleasure, provided the requisite number of shorts and longs is preserved. This variety, however, must be managed with a certain amount of taste and be free from all affectation; when it is done with discretion, it enhances the beauty and force of the verses, which otherwise would become too monotonous. It is just the same with Latin hexameters, which would be wanting in grace if the poet were to put either all dactyls or all spondees in the first four feet.

The Hindu poets, however, cannot indulge in this interchange of *ganams* in all their compositions. There are cases in which it is absolutely necessary for them to use only such as the rules prescribe.

The various kinds of lines in Hindu verse have all special names. One is called the elephant, another the tiger, another the cobra; and so forth.

Rhyme.

There are two kinds of rhymes in Hindu poetry. One occurs at the beginning of the line, and is called *yeti* or *vadi*. Thus, where one line begins with the word *kirti* and the other with *kirtana*, *ki* is the *yeti*. The other kind of rhyme occurs in the second letter or syllable of the line, and is called *prasam*. Thus, in two lines, one beginning with *gopagni* and the other with *dipantram*, *pa* is the *prasam*.

For the *yeti* rhyme the letters *ka*, *kaha*, *ksha*, *ga*, *gsha*, the simple *tsha*, and the aspirate *tshaha*, &c., may be used.

For the *prasam* rhyme attention is, strictly speaking, paid only to the consonant, which ought to be absolutely the same; the vowel does not matter so much. Thus *da*, *de*, *di*, *do*, *du* all rhyme together. These kinds of rhymes, however, are not considered fine.

Generally speaking, the more words there are in a line having the *yeti* and the *prasam* alike, the more beautiful they appear to the Hindus. For our part we should look upon them as mere childish alliterations, recalling to our minds the line of Ennius so often in the mouths of schoolboys:

> 'O Tite tute Tati tibi tanta, tyranne, tulisti!'

There are also other kinds of poetry, which, like ours, have their rhyme at the end of the lines. In these cases they end as a rule with the same consonant and sometimes with the same word.

Generally speaking, the difficulties of rhyme are simply hopeless, and often puzzle Hindu versifiers themselves.

VERSES.

With the *padams*, or lines, arranged symmetrically with regard to quantity and rhyme, are formed the *padyams*, sometimes called *slokams*. They are, properly speaking, stanzas or couplets, sometimes regular, sometimes irregular.

These *padyams* are of several kinds, and each has its special name.

In the simple *kanda-padyam* certain feet only can be introduced, in the same way as in Latin hexameters in which dactyls and spondees only are used. But a single *ganam*, or foot, may sometimes comprise a whole line, such as the following: *Devaki-Deviki-Kamsudu.*

The limits of this work hardly permit me to enter into more minute details concerning the numerous rules to which the structure and arrangement of Hindu poetry are subject; but it will appear from what has been already said that Hindu versification is by no means easy. There are nevertheless a great many people of all castes who dabble in rhymes, and amuse themselves by reading out publicly and ostentatiously the pieces they have composed. In India, as in Europe, poetasters abound, while good poets are very scarce. The Indian languages, however, being very rich in synonyms, afford a great advantage to the Hindu poet.

There are five principal authors who have written on the subject of Hindu prosody; and these have laid down fixed and unalterable laws for making verses. Their collected works are called *Chandas*. The Brahmin who taught me was guided in his instructions by a book whose author had so arranged that every rule was comprised in a verse which served at once the double purpose of an example of the rule as well as the rule itself.

OF TASTE AND STYLE IN HINDU POETRY.

The predominating features of Hindu poetry are emphasis, affectation, and bombast. Every Hindu poet would seem to be a prototype of him who, in Horace,

> 'Proicit ampullas et sesquipedalia verba,'

or of the Clitarchus compared by Longinus to a man who opens his mouth wide to blow through a tiny flute. The poetry of all nations has its peculiar turns of expression, its licences, its own vocabulary, &c., which render it difficult of understanding by foreigners; but in Hindu poetry the frequent use of elliptical phrases, of allegories, of metaphors, and of expressions not in vogue in ordinary language, renders the meaning so obscure that it is impossible to understand it properly unless one makes a special study of the subject. Even a thorough knowledge of Hindu prose works is of no avail.

Were Hindu literature better known to us, it is possible that we should find that we have borrowed from it the *romantic* style of our days, which some find so beautiful and others so silly. If the Hindu poet has occasion to describe any particular object, he seldom omits even the minutest details. He thinks it his duty to present it to the view in all its phases.

> 'S'il rencontre un palais, il m'en dépeint la face;
> Il me promène après de terrasse en terrasse:
> Ici s'offre un perron; là règne un corridor;
> Là ce balcon s'enferme en un balustre d'or,
> Il compte des plafonds les ronds et les ovales.'

If a Hindu poet has a beautiful woman for his theme, he will certainly never be content with merely stating, in a more or less flowery style, that she is endowed with all the charms of body and mind. Like the painter who reproduces on the canvas one feature after another of his model, so does our Hindu poet pass in review *a capite usque ad calcem* the various charms of the beauty he is describing. The colour of her skin, the expression of her face and eyes, in fine, everything connected with her, even her most secret charms, appear to him objects worthy of his praise. The finishing strokes of his brush are generally reserved for the touching up of all the moral and intellectual qualities

which his imagination can impart to the fair subject of his verses. It may be easily imagined that these descriptive details, overloaded as they are with a vast display of epithets, become exceedingly diffuse; but we cannot deny to them at least the credit of exactitude.

Hindu poetry at first sounds harsh and inharmonious to a European ear, by reason of the frequent aspirations with which many of the letters at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the words are pronounced; but, on the other hand, this laboured pronunciation gives to the recital a stately and sonorous tone, which seldom fails to please one who has become used to it. At the same time it must be confessed that foreigners, and even natives who have not been well trained in it from infancy, find almost insurmountable difficulties in mastering this method of pronunciation.

The short pieces that I have seen have appeared to me generally weak and uninspiring. I know not whether the Hindus have any real dramatic works. I only know of a few productions of this nature, and these are mixed up with songs and dialogues. The *Dasa-avatara*, or the ten incarnations of Vishnu, is among the number. But I am not in a position to give any particulars as to their merit, or even of their contents, seeing that I have never taken the trouble to read any of them.

More fortunate than the French, who are never weary of repeating that no epic poem exists in their literature, the Hindus boast of a great number. The two most celebrated are the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavata*. Both are of inordinate length. The former recounts the deeds and exploits of Vishnu under the incarnation of Rama; while the latter relates the adventures of Vishnu metamorphosed in the form of Krishna. Their authors have introduced into them the whole idolatrous system of the country—a system on which they are often at variance among themselves. It may be easily understood that the 'unities' prescribed by Aristotle have not been observed in these epics. The *Bhagavata* takes up its hero even before his birth, and does not quit him till after he is dead.

The fertile imagination of the ancient Greeks conceived nothing that can be compared with the incredible powers and

wonderful achievements of the Hindu heroes, whose exploits are celebrated in these books. Even the colossal Enceladus and the giant Briareus, with his fifty heads and his hundred hands, were but pigmies compared with the wonderful giants who, according to the *Ramayana*, sometimes fought for Rama and sometimes against him.

CHAPTER XXIII

Brahmin Philosophy.—The Six Sects called *Shan Mata*.—The Doctrine of the Buddhists.

I HAVE previously shown (in Part II, Chapter XI) that the ancient Brahmins recognized one Supreme and Almighty Being, possessing all the attributes that reasonable man should ascribe to such a Being. It is impossible to believe that these sages, being thus impressed with the idea of so perfect a Godhead, could have countenanced the absurdities of polytheism and idolatry. It was their successors who adopted these absurdities, little by little, until they led the nation, whose oracles they were, into all the extravagant doctrines in which they are now involved. It must nevertheless be acknowledged that the speculative theories in which these ancient philosophers indulged in the first instance, and of which I shall have occasion to speak later on, were calculated to corrupt this pure conception of the Deity and of the worship due to Him. Indeed, it was not long before divided opinions arose regarding the nature of God and the creation of the Universe. Two principal sects were gradually developed, each of which possesses up to the present day numerous adherents among the modern Brahmins[1]. The first

[1] There are, as a matter of fact, three sects. The first is that of *Adwaita*, or non-dualism. 'The Universe exists, but merely as a form of the one eternal essence. All animate and inanimate things are but parts of the Deity, and have no real existence of their own.' Then comes the *Dwaita* doctrine, or dualism, which holds that 'God is supreme, yet essentially different from the human soul and from the material world, both of which have a real and eternally distinct existence.' A third and important section hold the doctrine of *Visishtadwaita*, or doctrine of unity with attributes. This doctrine is like that of *Adwaita*, holding that the Deity and the Universe are one, but it goes further in holding that the Deity is not void of form or quality; it regards Him as being endowed with all good qualities and a twofold form: the Supreme Spirit, *Paramatma* or Cause, and the gross one, the effect, the Universe or Matter.'—ED.

is called the *Dwaita* (twofold) sect, whose adherents recognize the existence of *two* beings, namely, God and Matter, which He created and which is one with Him. The other sect, called *Adwaita* (not twofold), comprises those who acknowledge but one Being, one Substance, one God. It has a more numerous following than the other, and includes in its ranks the majority of those Brahmins who profess to be exceptionally learned. Its adepts designate the leading principles of their doctrine by the technical words *Abhavena Bhavam Nasti*, meaning *de nihilo nihil fit* (from nothing nothing is made). They maintain that Creation is an impossibility, and at the same time they hold that pre-existing and eternal Matter is absolutely chimerical. From these premises they conclude that all that we call the universe, including all the various phenomena which we see to be comprised within it, has no real existence at all, but is merely the result of illusion, which is known among them as *Maya*. From the large number of stories which they have invented for the purpose of illustrating this doctrine I have selected the following:—

'A certain man, in a dream, imagined that he had been crowned king of a certain country with great pomp and circumstance. The next morning, on leaving his house, he met a traveller, who gave him a detailed account of festivities and ceremonies that had actually taken place on the occasion of the coronation of the king of the same country, and of which he was himself an eye-witness. The incidents related by the latter agreed in all particulars with what the former had dreamed. Illusion, *Maya*, was equally prevalent in both cases; and there was no more reality in what the one man had seen than in what the other man had dreamed. In a word, things that we take for realities are nothing but illusions emanating from the Deity, who is the sole Being with an actual existence. Our senses deceive us in presenting to us objects which do not really exist. These objects indeed are nothing but appearances or modifications of the Deity; that is to say, there is nothing real about them.'

I do not know whether these would-be philosophers deduce from this pernicious doctrine all the consequences which naturally result from it, and look upon God as the immediate author of all the evil as well as all the good that takes place

on the earth. Several of them, at any rate, are not ashamed to express this opinion. The Brahmins with whom I have discussed the subject have candidly confessed to me that, in their opinion, neither good nor evil exists; that, in fact, all crimes, even parricide, adultery, fraud, and perjury, are but acts incited by the divine power; or rather, that these acts are imaginative and are simply the strange result of *Maya*, a delusion which deceives us and causes us to take the shadow for the reality[1].

The doctrine of *Dwaita* admits of two actual substances—God, and Matter created by God, with which He is inseparably united. God, according to this doctrine, is omnipresent. He pervades all Matter and incorporates Himself, so to speak, with it. He is present in every animate and inanimate thing. He does not, however, undergo the least change or the least modification by such coexistence, whatever may be the badness and imperfection of the things with which He is united. In support of this last contention, the adherents of the doctrine of *Dwaita* cite, for the purpose of comparison, fire and the rays of the sun. They say that fire can be incorporated in every substance, pure and impure, yet it never loses any of its own purity; so also with the rays of the sun, which are never polluted even when penetrating heaps of filth and mud.

According to these sectarians our souls emanate from God and form part of Him; just as light emanates from the sun, which illuminates the whole world with an infinite number of rays; just as numberless drops of water fall from the same cloud; and just as various trinkets are formed from the same ingot of gold. Whatever may be the number of these rays, of these drops of water, and of these trinkets, it is always to the same sun, to the same cloud, and to the same ingot of gold that they respectively belong.

However, from the very moment that a soul is united with a body it finds itself imprisoned in the darkness of ignorance and sin, just like a frog caught in the gullet of a snake from which it has no chance of escaping. Although the soul, thus imprisoned, continues to be one with God, it is, nevertheless, to

[1] The Abbé's opinion of the *Adwaita* doctrine is not supported by modern authorities, such as Professor Deussen and Professor Max Müller, who have written of it in the highest terms of praise.—ED.

a certain extent disunited and separated from Him. However great and good the soul may be which animates a human form, it becomes from that moment subject to all the sins, to all the errors, and to all the weaknesses which are the natural consequences of this union with a body. The vicissitudes that affect the soul while it is united with a body do not, however, affect that part of its nature which is divine. In this respect the soul may be compared to the moon, whose image is reflected in the water: if the water in which the image of the moon is reflected be disturbed, the image also becomes disturbed; but it cannot be said that the moon itself is disturbed. The changes and chances of the soul united with different bodies do not seriously concern God, from whom it emanates; and as to the soul itself, it is immutable, never undergoing the slightest change. Its union with the body lasts till such time as, by meditation and penance, it attains a degree of wisdom and perfection which permits it to reunite itself anew, and that inseparably and for ever, with God: that is to say, it ceases to migrate from one body to another.

The soul is said to be endowed with one of the following three *gunas*, or inherent qualities, viz. *sattva*, *rajas*, or *tamas*—*goodness*, *passion*, or *ignorance*. It frees itself at one time from one, at another time from another, of these inherent qualities, and it attains perfection only after it is entirely freed from all of them.

The five senses of the body play the part of councillors and slaves to the soul. For instance, should the soul perceive a desirable object, it immediately conceives the desire of possessing it. The feet are ordered to approach it, and when the object is in view, the eyes are commanded to behold it, and the hands to seize it, which orders are immediately executed. The nostrils are then commanded to smell it, the mouth to open, and the tongue to taste it; and these organs comply with its wishes. Thereupon the object passes into the body with which the soul is united, and the soul is then satisfied. Thus it is the soul that regulates the actions and the movements of the body. It may be compared, in this respect, with a magnet placed on a brass plate beneath which is an iron needle. If the magnet be moved round the plate, the needle follows in the same direction; but if the magnet be removed, the needle at once

drops down and remains motionless. The magnet is therefore typical of the soul, and the needle of the body. As long as these two are united, the body is susceptible of motion; but no sooner does the soul quit the body to take up its abode elsewhere than the body becomes insensible, is dissolved, and returns to the five elements from which it was originally formed. The soul, on the other hand, like the magnet, loses nothing of its efficacy, and in whatever body it takes up its abode, always remains the same.

The two great sects of philosophers above mentioned were subsequently divided into six others, known by the general name of *Shan Mata* (the six sects, or schools). Their names are (1) *Saiva*, (2) *Sakta*, (3) *Charvaka*, (4) *Kapalika*, (5) *Vaishnava*, (6) *Bouddha*. To strive to purify the soul, to acquire wisdom and perfection, to dissipate the darkness of sin and ignorance, to free oneself from the thraldom of passion and from the wretchedness of life with a view to union with and absorption in the Great Being, the Universal Soul, the *Paramatma* or *Parabrahma*: such are the objects aimed at by these various sects. Each is distinguished from the others by differences of opinion on the nature of perfect happiness and on the means of attaining it.

The different forms of knowledge taught in these schools are known by the following names: (1) *Nyaya*[1], (2) *Vedanta*, (3) *Mimamsa*, (4) *Sankhya*, (5) *Patanjala*, (6) *Vaiseshika*.

The first of these schools, the *Saiva*, founded by Gautama[2], who came from Tirat, near Patna, on the borders of the Ganges, is held to surpass the others in *Tarka-sastra*, i.e. Logic. It recognizes four sources of knowledge, viz. (1) *Pratyaksha*, or the testimony of the senses rightly exercised; (2) *Anumana*, or natural and visible signs, as for instance smoke, which is proof of the presence of fire; (3) *Upamana*, or *Upama*, or the application of a known definition to an unknown object still to be defined; (4) *Aptha-sabdam*, or the authority of infallible texts, which authority they ascribe to the Vedas, so far as religion and the worship of the gods are concerned, and to

[1] *Nyaya* is a compound Sanskrit root, meaning literally 'that by which we enter into a thing and draw conclusions.'—ED.

[2] This Gautama is not to be confused with Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.—ED.

the maxims of Gautama, their founder, so far as other matters are concerned.

After the study of Logic, the professors of this school lead their disciples to the study of the visible world, and then to a knowledge of its Author, whose existence, although invisible, is demonstrable by the process of *Anumana*. They gather from the same source proofs of His understanding, and from His understanding they deduce His immateriality.

But although God in His essence is spiritual, they say that He possesses the power of rendering Himself perceptible, and has, in fact, exercised that power. From *nirakara*, or possessing no form, He has become *akara*, or possessing form, with a view to shape and animate the world, whose atoms, although eternal, are nevertheless, without His presence, motionless and lifeless.

Man, according to them, is composed of one body and two souls, the one *supreme*, called *Paramatma*, which is nothing else than God Himself; the other *animal* or *vital*, known by the name of *Jivatma*, which is in us the sentient principle of pleasure and pain. Some hold that this is spiritual, others that it is material.

In order to attain supreme wisdom and perfect happiness this sentient principle must be extinguished; its complete extinction leading to union with *Paramatma*. The various gradations by which this union is attained will be spoken of later on. It begins with contemplation of, and ends in perfect identity with, God Himself. The process of metempsychosis continues in the meantime, the soul never ceasing its transmigrations from one body to another.

It must here be remarked that by the word *Soul* the learned mean the *Will* or else the *Ego*, the consciousness of Self.

The *Vedanta* school, founded by the celebrated Sankara Acharya, is distinguished from the rest by its metaphysics, and, we may add, by the obscurity of its dogmas. Most of the Brahmins of the present day who wish to pass themselves off as learned men, blindly embrace its principles without understanding them. True *sannyasis* are nowadays not to be found except in this school, which is founded on the system of *Adwaita*.

The characteristic feature of this sect is the belief in the simple *unity* of the being, who is none other than the Ego, that

is to say, the Soul. Nothing exists except the Ego, yet this Ego in its simple and absolute unity is, so to speak, a trinity (*trinus*) by (1) its existence, (2) its infinite wisdom, and (3) its supreme happiness.

But as the consciousness of Self is not at all in accordance with the sublime notions of this school, they admit another purely negative principle, which, in consequence, has no actual existence. This is the *Maya* of the Ego, i. e. error or illusion. For instance, I believe I am now writing to you about the *Vedanta*; but I am mistaken. It is true, indeed, I am Ego, I do actually exist; but you are not YOU, you do not exist. There is nothing existent in the world, except the Ego. There is neither *Vedanta*, nor doctrine, nor any being except the Ego. In imagining to myself that you exist, I am under the illusion of *Maya*. I am mistaken; that is all: the subject of my illusion does not in fact exist.

Maya, or illusion, makes men believe that they have wives and children, that they possess cattle, jewels, houses, and other temporal goods: but nothing of all this is real. Hindus explain the effects of this illusion very imperfectly by comparing them to a rope coiled on the ground and mistaken for a snake.

True wisdom consists in obtaining deliverance from this illusion by diligent contemplation of Self, by persuading oneself that one is the unique, eternal, and infinite Being, and so forth, without allowing one's attention to be diverted from this truth by the effects of *Maya*.

The key by which the soul may free itself from these illusions of *Maya* is contained in the following words, which these pretentious sages are bound to repeat without ceasing:—*Aham-Eva-Param-Brahma*, that is to say, *I am myself the Supreme Being*. The hypothetical conception of this idea, they say, should eventually result in actual conviction and lead to supreme blessedness.

The basic principle of the *Sankhya* school, founded by Kapila, is the doctrine of *Dwaita*; it rejects the *Upamana* of Logic, and seems generally less pretentious than the other schools. It also teaches that the soul is simply a part of God, and that the wisdom acquired by *yoga*, or contemplation, ends in either actual or spiritual unity with God.

Kapila recognized a spiritual nature and a material nature,

both of them real and eternal. The spiritual nature, by the exercise of the will, unites itself with the material nature outside itself. From this union are born an infinite number of forms and a certain number of qualities. Amongst the forms is that of the Ego, by reason of which each being can say: *I am I, and not another.*

As stated above, the qualities are three in number, viz. *goodness, passion, ignorance.* One or other of these three qualities predominates in all animate beings and accounts for the differences to be observed amongst them.

Another union of spirit (together with its forms and qualities) with Matter produces the elements; and a third produces the world as it stands.

Such then, according to this doctrine, is the synthesis of the universe. Wisdom acquired through various stages of contemplation produces freedom of the spirit, which liberates itself at one time from one form or quality, at another time from another, by constantly meditating on these three truths:—

1. I exist not in any thing!
2. Nothing exists in me!
3. I myself exist not!

This is expressed by the combination of these three words:

Nasmeeha-namama-naham!

The time comes at last when the spirit has liberated itself from all its forms and qualities. This means the end of the world, when everything, returning to its primitive state, is lost in and identified with God.

Kapila maintains that every religion known to him serves but to draw together more closely the bonds in which the spirit is held, instead of helping it to free itself from them. For, says he, the worship of subordinate deities, who are in reality nothing but the offspring of the most degraded and latest conceived union of spirit with Matter, binds us more closely to the object of it instead of liberating us from it.

The worship also of superior deities, who are in reality only the offspring of the closest union of spirit with Matter, cannot but be in the same way an obstacle to complete spiritual freedom. Such is the contention of Kapila, and one can but conclude that he wished to sap to the very foundations the

authority of the Vedas and of the Hindu religion. Indeed, the groundwork of his doctrine seems to bear a very close resemblance to that of Spinoza and other modern philosophers.

His doctrine gives us also to understand that the gods of the Vedas are merely allegorical figures relating to the world itself, as much in its first principles as in its component parts, which are but emanations from or modifications of these first principles.

Kapila rejects *in toto* the commonly accepted tenets of the Hindu religion, which, according to him, are founded on mythical, wicked, and impious stories.

He teaches that everything that tends to cherish the passions, to which one must necessarily yield if they are not surmounted, is calculated to bind the spirit anew to Matter and to prolong its captivity. It is only after having overcome all such passions, and especially those of lust, anger, and avarice, that one can aspire to complete freedom and the supreme blessedness known as *mukti*.

The *Mimamsa* school, which recognizes a blind and irresistible predestination, professes absolute toleration with regard to other sects. Its adepts scrutinize and discuss the dogmas of these sects, without condemning them or venturing on any decided opinion with regard to them. They commend the utmost tolerance in matters of opinion, and affirm that every sect—nay, every religion—pursues the same end, viz. happiness, although they may differ as to the means of attaining it.

I have already described[1] the abominable orgies of the *sakti-puja*, practised by the votaries of the *Sakta* sect[2]. Their

[1] See Part II, Chapter IX.

[2] The Saivas are all worshippers of Siva and Bhavani conjointly, and they adore the *linga* or compound type of this god and goddess, as the Vaishnavas do the image of Lakshminarayana. There are no exclusive worshippers of Siva besides the sect of naked Gymnosophists called *Lingis*; and the exclusive adorers of the goddess are the *Saktas*. In this last-mentioned sect, as in most others, there is a right-handed and decent path, and a left-handed and indecent mode of worship; but the indecent worship of this sect is most grossly so, and consists of unbridled debauchery with wine and women. This profligate sect is supposed to be numerous, though unavowed. In most parts of India, if not in all, they are held in deserved detestation; and even the decent *Saktas* do not make public profession of their tenets, nor wear on their foreheads the mark of the sect, lest they should be suspected of belonging to the other branch of it. The sacrifice of cattle before idols is peculiar to this sect.—H. T. COLEBROOK.

principal doctrine seems to be that happiness consists in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures.

There is another sect called *Bouddha Mata,* which has no Brahmin adherents at all, its followers being chiefly Buddhists, whose number at present is very small in Southern India. Their doctrine is pure materialism. Spinoza and his disciples endeavoured to palm it off as a new invention of their own; but the atheists of India recognized this doctrine many centuries before them and drew from it pretty much the same deductions which their European brethren afterwards drew, and which have been propagated in modern times with such deplorable success.

According to this odious doctrine there is no other god but Matter, which is divided into an infinite number of substances, forming as many deities according to some, and forming but one god according to others. They hold that there can be neither vice nor virtue during life; neither heaven nor hell after death. The truly wise man, according to them, is he who enjoys every kind of sensual pleasure, who believes in nothing that is not capable of being felt, and who looks upon everything else as chimerical.

God, that is to say Matter, remarks a philosopher of this abominable school, possesses four *saktis* or *faculties,* which are like so many wives to him. These are *Knowledge, Desire, Energy,* and *Maya,* or *Illusion.* The body, by applying all its senses at one and the same time to a particular object, enjoys unalloyed pleasure, which is said to be imperfect when the enjoyment is limited to a part only of the senses. It is also from this want of consciousness, or from its partial application, that pain and sleep originate. Death is merely the total failure of the application of bodily consciousness to the senses. The body thus becomes insensible and perishes.

It is, they say, simply to amuse and divert Himself with the pleasures of infancy that God, that is to say Matter, assumes the form of a child. Similarly He attains the respective stages of adolescence and old age. Such, briefly, according to this school, is the whole secret of birth, life, and death.

The second *sakti* or divine faculty is Desire, the effects of which are as varied as its impressions. God is man, horse, insect, &c., in fact, whatever He wishes to be. This Desire is, in

different creatures, as varied as their inclinations. But each is satisfied when enjoying what pleases him most.

The *sakti* of Desire, however, obscures that of Knowledge: that is, it hinders one from knowing that there is no other deity but the body, and that birth, life and death, sin and virtue, and the successive re-births are purely chimerical. From this ignorance, occasioned by Desire, originate the inclinations of mankind; such as the affection of a mother for her children and the care she bestows in bringing them up. The truly wise man, who is anxious to acquire a clear perception of the truth, must, therefore, renounce all such Desire.

The third *sakti* is *Energy*, about which these pretentious philosophers speak still more foolishly. The universe, according to them, was in a state of chaos; men lived without laws and without caste, in a state of utter insubordination. To remedy this disorder, a general consultation of bodies was held. Energy spoke first: 'Collecting from all bodies whatever is found most excellent in each, I will form a perfect man, who, by his beauty, wisdom, and strength, shall make himself master of the whole earth and shall become its sovereign lord. I will be his spouse; and from our union shall be born bodies innumerable, each more perfect than another.'

The proposal of Energy was approved and carried into effect. It fully succeeded; and from the wife of a Brahmin called Suddhodana Energy begot the god Buddha, who was a man incomparable in all his perfections and the lawgiver of the human race. He promulgated laws, the transgression of which alone constituted sin. And the greatest sin of all is to deny Buddha to be what he is. He who acknowledges him is the true Buddhist, the genuine Brahmin, the *guru* among Brahmins. He knows no other god than his own body. To his body alone he offers up sacrifice, and procures for it all possible sensual pleasures. He has no dread of anything; he eats indiscriminately of all food; he scruples not to lie in order to attain the object of his wish; he acknowledges neither Vishnu nor Siva, nor any other god but himself.

But, seeing that all individual bodies are so many deities, why is it that they do not all possess the same feelings, the same inclinations, and the same knowledge? Why is there such a great number of them ignorant of so many beautiful things, of

which the Buddhists make so much? Such were substantially the objections which a new proselyte of the sect addressed to one of its wise men. The latter replied that the evil was born of the fourth wife, or *sakti*, of the divinity, called *Maya* or Illusion, which fascinates and deceives mankind, making them look upon what is false as true. It, moreover, misleads them into the belief that there are gods; that there are such vicissitudes as living and dying, pollution and purification; and, finally, that there are sufferings and rewards after death. The only method of preserving oneself from *Maya* is to cling to the doctrine of Buddhism in acknowledging no other god but the material body.

The author from whose work I have extracted this very obscure account of the system undertakes to explain the theory of Creation, and to show how God, united to *Maya*, produced men differing so greatly in their inclinations. But all that he advances on this subject is merely the result of an extravagant imagination, and is no more worthy of attention than the talk of a sick man deprived of the use of his reason by delirium [1].

Returning to his doctrines, I may remark that he sneers at the Brahmins for their ablutions, fasts, penances, sacrifices, Vedas, &c. The true Veda, or rather the true religion, he declares, is for a man to procure for himself all sensual enjoyments; to gratify all his desires; to avenge himself on his enemies, even unto death; to renounce all feelings of humanity, and to live but for himself. Such sentiments as filial affection, kindness, gentleness, and pity are regarded in this infamous book, not as virtues, but (who would believe it?) as sins. As an illustration of this principle, mention is made, in terms of the highest praise, of a certain king who scarcely ever quitted the apartments of his wives, and who condemned to death a person whose only crime was to pity the sufferings of his fellow-creatures.

It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that human monsters who professed doctrines so detestable and so opposed to all considerations of social well-being, became objects of general execration, and that they were almost exterminated in India, where, it appears, they were once so powerful.

[1] This description of Buddhism conveys an altogether false impression, and readers are recommended to consult more modern authorities on the subject.—ED.

Nevertheless, I doubt whether the genuine Buddhists, even in countries where their religion is predominant, would dare to avow publicly such terrible doctrines. I even suspect that the book which contains an exposition of this doctrine is the work of Brahmins themselves, who, for the purpose of bringing odium upon a sect for which their caste entertains the most implacable hatred, invented these opinions, the very mention of which makes one shudder. At any rate the book contains certain maxims which betray the influence of Hindu sophistry. The following are examples illustrating the foolish extremes to which they go:—

'One ought never to yield to taste or appetite in eating or drinking; one must habituate oneself to the most nauseous food.'

'One must elevate oneself above the prejudices of the vulgar, and one must always pursue, in one's conduct and mode of thinking, a course opposite to that of others.'

The Brahmins, in order to cast odium on the Jains, their enemies, accuse them also of professing the doctrines of Buddhism; but the Jains resent with indignation the false insinuations of their adversaries. I have myself heard several Jains speak very forcibly on the horror which such principles inspire in them, and complain most bitterly of the dubious methods of the Brahmins, who, actuated by hatred and jealousy, are not at all ashamed to resort to these false imputations.

There are also other sects, not so well known; and among them is the *Nastika* sect, whose fundamental doctrine consists in absolute pyrrhonism or scepticism; and also the *Lokayatha Sastra* sect, whose adherents recognize no differences of condition amongst mankind, no precepts relating to pollution and purification, and who are, moreover, accused of devoting themselves to witchcraft and enchantments.

Such, in brief, is what I have been able to understand of the numerous doctrines about which there exists such diversity of opinion amongst the Hindus. With the object of obtaining an insight into these various matters with greater facility, I engaged the services of a Brahmin, who was said to be learned, and who, in fact, was not wanting in intelligence or knowledge. But I soon perceived that he was himself completely lost in this labyrinth of metaphysics; and the various Commentaries to

which he referred for some plausible explanations of my difficulties tended only to increase those difficulties. However, being very often too proud and presumptuous to acknowledge his inability to make me understand what he did not understand himself, he tried to get out of his difficulties by hums and haws. By gestures and pantomimic signs, which were truly laughable, he endeavoured to make up for the explanations which I in vain sought from him, and he often left me to myself to clear up my own difficulties.

CHAPTER XXIV

Chronology of the Brahmins.—The Epoch of the Flood.

THE Hindus recognize four ages of the world, to which they give the name of *yugas*. They assign to each *yuga* a period of time which, when all the *yugas* are added together, would make the creation of the world date back several millions of years.

The first is called *Kritha-yuga*, to which they assign 1,728,000 years. The second, which they call *Tretha-yuga*, lasted about 1,296,000 years. The third, called *Dwapara-yuga*, lasted about 864,000 years. And the last, in which we are now living, is called *Kali-yuga*, or the Age of Misery. It should last about 432,000 years. The present year of the Christian era (1825) corresponds to the year 4,926 of the *Kali-yuga*.

According to this calculation the world has now been in existence for 3,892,926 years.

It is hardly necessary for me to waste time in proving that the first three ages are entirely mythical. The Hindus themselves seem to regard them in that light, since in ordinary life they make no mention of them. All their calculations and dates, as well as all the most ancient and authentic records at present to be found among them, are reckoned from the commencement of the *Kali-yuga*.

This pretension to remote antiquity is a favourite illusion amongst ancient civilized peoples, who, as they sank into idolatry, soon forgot the traditions of their ancestors regarding the creation of the world, and believed they could add to their own glory by assuming an origin which was, so to say, lost in the dim vista of mythical times. It is well known to what extremes the Chinese, the Egyptians, and the Greeks carried this mania, and it is characteristic of the Hindus that they far excel these nations in their pretensions.

At the close of each of the *yugas* there took place a universal upheaval in nature. No trace of the preceding *yuga* survived in that which followed. The gods themselves shared in the changes brought about by these great upheavals. Vishnu, for instance, who was white in the preceding *yuga*, became black in the present one.

But of all the *yugas* the most direful is the *Kali-yuga*, in which we now live. It is verily an Iron Age, an epoch of misrule and misery, during which everything on earth has deteriorated. The elements, the duration of life, the character of mankind: everything, in a word, has suffered, everything has undergone a change. Deceit has taken the place of justice, and falsehood that of truth. And this degeneration must continue and go on increasing till the end of the *yuga*.

From what I have just stated it will be seen that the commencement of the true era of the Hindus, that is to say, of their *Kali-yuga*, dates from about the same time as the epoch of the Deluge—an event clearly recognized by them and very distinctly mentioned by their authors, who give it the name of *Jala-pralayam*, or the Flood of Waters.

Their present era, indeed, dates specifically from the commencement of this *Jala-pralayam*. It is definitely stated in the *Markandeya-purana* and in the *Bhagavata* that this event caused the destruction of all mankind, with the exception of the seven famous *Rishis* or Penitents whom I have often had occasion to mention, and who were saved from the universal destruction by means of an ark, of which Vishnu himself was the pilot. Another great personage, called Manu, who, as I have tried elsewhere to show, was no other than the great Noah himself, was also saved along with the seven great Penitents. The universal flood is not, to my knowledge, more clearly referred to in the writings of any heathen nation that has preserved the tradition of this great event, or described in a manner more in keeping with the narrative of Moses, than it is in the Hindu books to which I have referred.

It is certainly remarkable that such testimony should be afforded us by a people whose antiquity has never been called in question; the only people, perhaps, who have never fallen into a state of barbarism; a people who, judging by the position, the climate, and the fertility of their country, must have been

one of the first nations to be regularly constituted; a people who from time immemorial have suffered no considerable changes to be made in their primitive customs, which they have always held inviolable. And curiously enough, in all their ordinary transactions of life, in the promulgation of all their acts, in all their public monuments, the Hindus date everything from the subsidence of the Flood. They seem to tacitly acknowledge the other past ages to be purely chimerical and mythical, while they speak of the *Kali-yuga* as the only era recognized as authentic. Their public and private events are always reckoned by the year of the various cycles of sixty years which have elapsed since the Deluge. How many historical facts, looked upon as established truths, have a far less solid foundation than this!

Another very remarkable circumstance is that the Hindu method of reckoning the age of the world agrees essentially with what we have in Holy Scripture. In Genesis viii. 13, for example, we read: 'In the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth.' We read in Hindu works: 'On such a day of such a month of such a year of such a cycle, reckoning from the commencement of the *Kali yuga*.'

It is true that in the passage just quoted from Holy Scripture the date is reckoned from Noah's birth. He was then entering on his six hundred and first year. But according to many chronologists, it appears that in times immediately succeeding the Deluge the Scriptures reckon time by this patriarch, and that the anniversary of his birth commemorated the day on which the earth was restored to mankind—a memorable epoch from which they henceforth dated the years of the newly-restored earth, that is, of the new era which they had just entered.

The mighty changes which nations underwent entirely upset their calculations relating to those remote times; but the Hindus, settled as they were in a country long exempt from the revolutionary troubles that agitated other countries, have been able to preserve intact the tradition of those events.

Their ordinary cycle is of sixty years, but they have also adopted another of ninety years, used in astronomical calculations. The latter is a much more recent invention, and was introduced at the time of the death of a famous king of India,

named Salivahana, who reigned over a province then called Sagam, and who died at the end of the first century of the Christian era. It should be remarked that the use of these two different cycles could never occasion the least confusion in point of dates, since a period of three ordinary cycles corresponds to a period of two astronomical cycles, and they both start from the same epoch.

The Chinese, likewise, have an ordinary cycle of sixty years in common with the Hindus; but there is this difference between the two: the Chinese, according to Du Halde, are ignorant as to when their era commenced, at least with reference to the epoch of the Flood. On the other hand, it is hardly likely that the two nations could have communicated with each other on this subject, seeing that they do not agree in their computations. According to the author just quoted, the birth of our Saviour falls on the fifty-eighth year of the Chinese cycle, while it coincides with the forty-second year of the Hindu cycle. But this coincidence, nevertheless, goes to confirm the high antiquity of the cycle of sixty years still in use with the two most ancient races on the face of the earth.

It would be quite useless to inquire whether this cycle was adopted before the Flood, and whether it was from Noah or his immediate descendants that the Hindus and Chinese learned its use. We do know for certain, however, that the weekly period was known prior to this remarkable event, and that the Hindu week agrees exactly with that of the Hebrews and with ours. Indeed, the days of their week correspond exactly with those of ours, and bear similar names.

One peculiar circumstance is that just as every day of the Hindu week has its own particular name, so has each of the sixty years of a cycle. Thus, they do not say like us that a certain event happened, say, on the twentieth or thirtieth year before or after such an era. But they give the year its particular name, and say, for example, that such an event happened in the year *Kilasa*, in the year *Bhava*, in the year *Vikary*, and so forth.

The only real difficulty is that the Hindu computation with regard to the epoch of the Flood does not appear to correspond with that of Holy Scripture.

But it should be remembered that there is a difference of more than nine hundred years between the period supposed to

have elapsed between the Flood and the Birth of Christ according to the Septuagint on the one hand, and according to the Vulgate on the other hand. Yet neither of these calculations is wholly rejected, and both of them are supported by able chronologists. The Catholic Church, which adheres to the Vulgate for the Old Testament, adopts the calculation of the Septuagint for the Roman Martyrology, which forms part of its liturgy. The difference, therefore, between the Hindu calculation and ours does not appear a sufficient reason for rejecting it, or even for supposing that it does not proceed from the same source.

According to Hindu calculations, the time that elapsed between the Deluge and the Birth of Jesus Christ is 3,102 years. This period differs from that laid down in the Vulgate by about 770 years; but it approaches much nearer to the calculations made in the Septuagint, which gives 3,258 years between the Deluge and the commencement of the Christian era. If we accept this last calculation, the epoch of the Hindu *Jala-pralayam* does not differ from that of the Deluge of the Holy Scriptures by more than 156 years, a discrepancy of no great importance, considering the intricacy of a computation which dates from such remote times. I am, therefore, fully convinced that the Hindu computation serves to corroborate the accuracy of the event as narrated by Moses, and adds incontestable evidence to prove that most important event, the Universal Deluge.

Some modern chronologists, with the learned Tournemine at their head, who based their calculations on the Vulgate, have professed to reckon between the Deluge and the Christian era a period of 3,234 years, and they have supported their calculations with substantial arguments. Their learned investigations in this direction excited even in those days the admiration of competent critics. In relying, therefore, on this calculation, we have a difference of only 132 years between the Hindu computation and that of Holy Scripture as regards the Deluge.

Deucalion's Flood does not approach so near the Universal Deluge of Scripture as the *Jala-pralayam* of the Hindus. All the critics place the former so near the Birth of Jesus Christ that its comparative modernness alone is quite sufficient to prove that it has not even been borrowed from other ancient nations. The Flood of Ogyges, the occurrence of which is

generally placed in the year 248 before that of Deucalion, is, however, posterior by more than twelve hundred years to the Universal Deluge, according to the Hindu calculations of the *Jala-pralayam*. We have, therefore, fresh evidence that the Flood of Ogyges and that of Deucalion were only partial inundations, if indeed they are not altogether mythical.

CHAPTER XXV

The Epistolary Style of the Brahmins.—Hindu Handwriting.

THE epistolary style of the Brahmins and of Hindus in general is in many respects so different from ours that a few specimens may be not uninteresting to many of my readers.

Letter to an Inferior.

'They, the Brahmin Soobayah, to him the Brahmin Lakshmana, who possesses all kinds of good qualities, who is graced with all the virtues, who is true to his word, who, by the services he renders to his relations and friends, resembles the *Chintamani*[1]. *Asirvadam*[2]!

'The year *Kilasa*, the fourth day of the month of *Phalguna*, I am at Dharmapuri and in good health. I am very anxious to have news of thee.

'As soon as this letter reaches thee, thou must go to that most excellent and most virtuous Brahmin Anantayah, and, prostrating thyself at full length at his feet, thou must offer him my most humble respects.

'And then, without delay, thou must present thyself before the *chetty* (merchant) Rangapah, and declare to him frankly on my behalf that if he will now place in thy hands the three thousand rupees which he owes me, with the interest due thereon at thirty per cent., I will forget all that has passed, and the matter shall be finally settled. But if, on the contrary, he makes excuses and puts off the payment of the said amount, including interest, tell him that I am acquainted with certain efficacious means of teaching him that no person shall with impunity break

[1] This is a mythical stone which is supposed to procure every blessing for those who possess it.—DUBOIS.

[2] The word *Asirvadam* means 'blessing.'—ED.

his word with a Brahmin such as I am. This is all I have to say to thee. *Asirvadam*!'

Letter to an Equal.

'To them, the lords, the lords Ramayah[1], who possess all those good qualities and virtues which render a man esteemed; who are worthy of all the favours which the gods can bestow; who are the particular favourites of the goddess Lakshmi; who are great as Mount Meru; who possess a perfect knowledge of the *Yajur-Veda*; they, the Brahmin Soobayah. *Namaskaram*[2]!

'The year *Durmati*, the fifteenth of the month of *Veishaka*, I and all the members of my family being in the enjoyment of good health. I shall learn with great pleasure that it is the same with you; and I trust you will let me know in detail all the matters which give you joy and contentment.

'The twenty-second of the above-mentioned month being a day on which all the good omens are combin , we have selected it for the commencement of the marriage fe: vities of my daughter Vijaya-Lakshmi. I beg you will be good enough to be present here before that day, and to bring with you all the members of your household without excepting any. I beg that you will place yourself at the head of the ceremony, and that you will be pleased to conduct it[3].

'Lastly, if there is anything in which I can be of service to you, I request you will be pleased to let me know. *Namaskaram*!'

Letter to a Superior.

'To them, the lords, the Brahmin lords, the great Brahmins Lakshmanayah, who are endowed with every virtue; who are great as Mount Meru; who possess a perfect knowledge of the four Vedas; who, by the splendour of their good works, shine forth like the sun; whose renown is known throughout the

[1] A superior and even an equal is always addressed in the plural, both in speaking and writing. This is a rule invariably observed among the well-bred.—DUBOIS.

[2] *Namaskaram* means 'respectful greeting.'—DUBOIS.

[3] This is an expression used merely out of politeness in the case of every one who is invited under similar circumstances.—DUBOIS.

fourteen worlds, and who are highly praised therein:—I, Krishnayah, their humble servant and slave, keeping myself at a respectful distance from them, with both hands joined, my mouth closed, my eyes cast down, my head bent—I wait in this humble posture, until they may vouchsafe to cast their eyes on one who is nothing in their presence. After obtaining their leave, approaching them with fear and respect, and prostrating myself on the ground at their feet, which are in reality *tamarasa* (lotus) flowers; after saluting those feet with profound respect and kissing them, I address to them the following humble supplication:—

'The year *Vikary*, the twentieth of the month *Pushya*, I, your most humble slave, whom you have deigned to look upon as some chattel, having received with both hands the letter which your excellency humbled yourself by writing to me, having kissed it and put it on my head, I afterwards read it with all possible attention and care. Your excellency may rest assured that I will execute punctually the orders contained in it, without departing from them by the breadth of a grain of sesamum. The business mentioned in the letter has already been fairly begun, and I hope that by the efficacy of your excellency's benediction it will soon terminate to your excellency's honour and advantage. As soon as it is finished, I, your most humble servant and slave, shall not fail to present myself at your excellency's feet to receive your orders.

'Lastly, I entreat your excellency to impart to me the commands and instructions necessary to enable me to act in a manner agreeable to your excellency, and to point out to me in what way I may render myself most acceptable to your sacred feet, which are real *tamarasa* flowers. For this purpose it will not be necessary for your excellency to humble yourself still more by writing to me a second time; but it will suffice if I receive from your excellency's bounty a leaf of betel indented with your nail, through some confidential person who can verbally explain to me the orders of your excellency[1].

'Such is my most humble prayer.'

The complimentary expressions used at the beginning of all

[1] This device frequently serves for credentials in conveying verbal messages.—DUBOIS.

these letters, and the humble and servile tone which pervades them, especially the third letter, present when translated sufficiently remarkable examples of epistolary style, yet I have by no means brought out the full force, or rather the extreme platitude, of all these expressions.

Our language has no equivalents for the expressions of base flattery and humility with which the Hindus are so lavish in their correspondence. These expressions are, moreover, used with a certain amount of moderation in the letters just quoted. I have seen some the complimentary preface alone of which would have filled two pages of this book. The eloquence of a writer is inexhaustible under this head, especially when there is any question of obtaining some boon or favour. A petitioner can, indeed, without fear of seeing it thrown back in his face,—

> 'A son héros, dans un bizarre ouvrage,
> Donner de l'encensoir au travers du visage.'

The thicker the smoke of the incense the more does it flatter him to whom it is offered.

In letters written by one Hindu to another, one never finds respectful assurances or compliments offered to a wife. The mere mention of her in a letter would be considered not simply as an indiscretion, but as a gross breach of politeness, at which the husband would have every reason to feel aggrieved.

When one Hindu has occasion to communicate to another the death of one of his relatives, the custom is to slightly burn the end of the palm-leaf on which the afflicting news is written; and this is similar to the black seal used by us in such cases. The same practice is observed as a sign of displeasure, when one has occasion to administer a severe reprimand in writing.

When a superior writes to an inferior, he puts his own name before that of the person to whom he writes. The reverse is the case when an inferior writes to a superior. Any breach of this token of civility on the part of an inferior would be considered a dire insult by the person to whom he owed respect. Politeness also requires that, when writing to an equal, you should place your own name last.

Having said this much on the epistolary style of the Hindus,

I will now offer some notes that I have collected on their handwriting.

Learned European scholars have made endless researches as to the origin of the art of writing, the manner in which it was transmitted by one people to another, the different characters used, and the various kinds of tablets and other materials employed. Many conjectures have been offered concerning the systems invented by the Chinese and the Egyptians to transmit their ideas otherwise than verbally. The languages of India, however, seem to have escaped the learned investigations of philologists. Nevertheless, a careful study of these languages would, if I am not mistaken, throw a good deal of light on questions still shrouded in uncertainty. I have not the slightest pretensions to having discovered any new origin of written language, nor have I the vain presumption of depriving the Phoenician Cadmus of the glory of having invented the elementary principles of—

> 'Cet art ingénieux
> De peindre la parole et de parler aux yeux
> Et par les traits divers de figures tracées
> Donner de la couleur et du corps aux pensées.'

I shall think myself fortunate enough if what I am about to say be considered worthy of the attention of the learned, and if it present some points of interest to those who are fond of discovering traces of primitive times in the usages that still exist.

The Hindu books attribute the credit of this invaluable invention to the great Brahma, the creator of men and the sovereign arbiter of their destinies. The serrated sutures to be seen on a skull are, they say, nothing less than the handwriting of Brahma himself; and these indelible characters, traced by his divine hand, contain the irrevocable decrees regulating the destiny of each individual of the human race. It may be urged that this Hindu belief is a mere myth, and, as such, cannot be regarded as the basis of any reasonable conjectures. I am of the same opinion; but it must also be admitted that it is one of the oldest myths of India, and it proves at any rate that when it was invented the knowledge of writing already existed. Otherwise how could the Hindus of those remote times have discovered traces of writing in

these marks on skulls? Another fact, or another myth, if one prefers to call it so, may be said to corroborate this. The four Vedas are considered to be the work of the god Brahma, who wrote them with his own hand on leaves of gold. These books, which contain the ritual of the idolatrous ceremonies practised by these people, are held by them in great veneration, and their high antiquity is nowhere called into question. Other books, too, many of which are undoubtedly very old, speak of the Vedas as of a far earlier date. Moreover, the language in which they are written has become unintelligible in many places. The Vedas, indeed, by whomsoever they may have been written, conclusively prove that the origin of Hindu writing dates from a period which is lost in remote antiquity.

One of the principal articles of the Hindu faith is that relating to the ten *Avatars*, or incarnations, of Vishnu. The first and earliest is called the *Matsya-avatar*, that is, the incarnation of the god in the form of a fish. And what was the cause of it? It was the loss of the four books of the Vedas. Brahma, under whose care they were left, fell asleep, and a giant, his enemy, availed himself of the opportunity to steal the sacred volumes. Having escaped unperceived, the giant hid himself in the sea with his precious booty, which he swallowed, thinking it would be safer in his bowels. Vishnu, having been informed of what had happened, changed himself into a fish, and went in pursuit of this enemy of the gods. After a long search, he at length discovered the giant in the deepest abyss of the ocean. He attacked him, vanquished him, and tore him in pieces. He then plucked the hidden books from the giant's entrails, and restored them to the god who was their author and guardian.

Is there anything to be found in any books of ours whose unquestionable antiquity is recognized by European writers that might be said to compare with this fable, any indication of sources from which it could have been borrowed, thus proving its modern date? I think not.

Some of the Hindu authors ascribe the invention of writing to a famous Penitent called Agastya, who, it is said, was not taller than a hand's breadth. He is one of the most ancient persons recognized by the Hindus, inasmuch as they make him contemporary with the seven Penitents who were saved from the Flood in the ark, of which Vishnu himself was the pilot.

Again, the Gymnosophists, or naked penitents of India, have never been regarded as mythical personages. Even in the time of Lycurgus, that is to say, nearly nine hundred years before the Christian era, these philosophers enjoyed such a reputation for wisdom and learning that their fame had spread to countries far remote from their own. There is every reason to believe that their fame could only have been established gradually, and that their philosophy dated from a very remote period. True, some authors assert that their philosophy was handed down by oral tradition, and that they never committed anything to writing. It is, however, hard to believe that men who gave themselves up to the study of philosophy and astronomy could have done so without having recourse to written records.

Be this as it may, I will now briefly describe the present style of writing among the Hindus, mentioning (1) the written characters used, (2) the materials on which they are recorded, (3) the manner in which they are written, and (4) the shape of their books and of the communications which they address to each other.

It is generally stated that there are eighteen living languages in use in India; but as a matter of fact there are many more. All, or at any rate the majority of them, have their own distinct alphabetical characters. It is true that some of these characters, if carefully examined, bear a very close resemblance to each other; but in the majority of them one can distinguish no similarities. Yet, however diversified may be the characters employed in writing, there are many similarities to be observed in pronunciation and phraseology. In all these languages the arrangement of words admits of few changes or differences. In this particular they differ widely from the European languages, which, with a general resemblance in their alphabetical characters, admit of large variations in construction and phraseology.

What resemblance could, for instance, be found between the letters

அ	ஆ	த
(*a* short)	(*a* long)	(*tha*)

of the Tamil language and the letters

అ	ఆ	త
(*a* short)	(*a* long)	(*tha*)

of the Telugu language? And the difference is not less striking in the other letters of the alphabet. Yet these two languages are spoken in countries bordering on each other, which in other respects present many points of resemblance. The same diversity with regard to alphabets is noticeable in other Indian languages.

Other facts worthy of note are that in all the languages of India (1) the letters are arranged in the same order; (2) the short and long vowels are always placed at the beginning of the alphabet and before the consonants; (3) these vowels are purely initial letters, which are never written except at the beginning of a word, special inflections being assigned to them when used in the middle of a word or after a consonant; (4) each consonant must have a vowel inflection: thus, *b*, *c* are pronounced *ba*, *ca*, and their form is changed when other vowel inflections are substituted. For instance, in Canarese the following letters change their form according to the vowel inflections to which they are subject, thus:—

ಬ	ಬೆ	ಬಿ	ದ	ದೆ	ದಿ	ಧೊ	ಧು
ba	*be*	*bi*	*tha*	*they*	*thee*	*dho*	*dhu*

How is it that there is so much resemblance between the various idioms of these languages, and so much dissimilarity between the letters of their alphabets? Sanskrit appears to be the common type on which the other languages have modelled their phraseology; how comes it then that they have, in opposition to the mother-tongue, adopted letter formations so different from that of their common parent?

Similar variations are observable in the forms of their ciphers or symbols. Though they all use the decimal notation, they differ widely in the formation of their arithmetical figures. In the Tamil language, each decimal number is denoted by a different sign, thus:—

௧	௰	௱	௲
1	10	100	1000

In Telugu and in most of the other languages of the country, they follow exactly the system which we have adopted from the Arabs, the units being expressed by a single figure, the

tens by two, the hundreds by three, the thousands by four, and so on.

This method, with the exception of a few slight differences in the shape of the figures, is the one most commonly used. The similarity which exists between this method and that of the Arabs can hardly have been the result of chance. If one nation did not borrow it from the other, it is at any rate probable that both borrowed it from the same source.

The Tamil arithmetical symbols seem, however, to bear a greater resemblance to the Roman than to the Arabic numerals. Like the Romans, the Tamils express the greater part of their arithmetical signs by letters of the alphabet, and use only a single letter to denote units, tens, hundreds, and thousands as stated above.

But, dissimilar as are the written characters of the various Hindu languages, they are still more dissimilar to the written characters known to us as used by other ancient nations, such as Syriac, Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, &c. Unlike the majority of Oriental languages, which are written from right to left, Sanskrit and the various dialects of India are written, like the European languages, from left to right.

Paper is not unknown to the Hindus. They manufacture it, not from cotton rags, as is generally believed, but from the fibre of the aloe. I am, however, inclined to believe that the use of this coarse paper is of comparatively recent date in India, subsequent, that is, to the invasion of the Moghuls, who must have introduced it. At any rate, following the example of the Moghuls, the Hindus living in the interior of the country, where palm leaves are not procurable, use paper instead. But more generally they use black tablets named *kadatta*, on which they write with a white pencil, called in Canarese *balapu*, made of a calcareous quarried stone which is very common in the country. And it is with these materials that children learn writing in the schools.

Nevertheless the ordinary practice almost everywhere is to write on palm leaves, of which there are two species, large and small. The latter are the commoner and are said to be the better; they are about three inches wide and two feet long. Seven or eight lines can be written on each leaf. They are thicker, stiffer, and stouter than double paper, so that one can

easily write, or rather engrave, on both sides of them. The other kinds of leaves are broader, but not so strong. They are therefore used only in those places where the smaller kinds are not easily procurable. They are sometimes used specially as a mark of respect when writing to a person of rank. The island of Ceylon produces an enormous quantity of the smaller leaves, and they are so cheap that a halfpenny's worth of them would be sufficient for copying an entire folio volume.

Quintus Curtius relates that the Hindus, at the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great, wrote with an iron *stilus* on the soft and smooth bark of trees. It is quite probable that palm leaves were mistaken for the bark of trees; for nowhere in India can any evidence be found to prove that the bark of trees has ever been used for the purpose of writing.

Aeneas, in Virgil's epic, implores the Cumaean Sibyl not to write her oracles on the leaves of trees, which the winds might speedily disperse:

> 'Foliis tantum ne carmina manda,
> Ne turbata volent rapidis ludibria ventis.'

All the commentators are of opinion that the reference here is to palm leaves. It is therefore to be presumed that these leaves were quite different from those now used in India, which, on account of their weight and thickness, could not be blown about by the wind.

The Hindus write with an iron *stilus*, or pencil, which is from eight to nine inches long. The handle of the instrument generally ends in a knife, which is used to trim the sides of the leaves so as to make them all of one size. In writing with the *stilus* neither chair nor table is required. The leaf is supported on the middle finger of the left hand, and is kept steady by being held firmly between the thumb and the forefinger. The *stilus*, in writing, does not glide along the leaf, as does our pen on paper; but the writer, after finishing a word or two, fixes the point of his instrument on the last letter, and pushes the leaf from right to left till the line of writing is finished. This is executed with such ease that it is by no means a rare sight to see Hindus writing as they walk along.

As the characters thus traced are only a sort of faint engraving, of the same colour as the leaf itself, and therefore

not easily decipherable, it is the common practice to besmear the whole with fresh cow-dung. The leaf is afterwards wiped clean, but the new material fills up the engraved letters and gives them a darker colour, thus rendering them more distinct and readable.

This mode of writing is undoubtedly more convenient and more simple than ours, so far at least as writing on a small scale is concerned, for it does not require all the materials that we need on such occasions; but it will be readily understood that it is not equally convenient for writings of a somewhat voluminous nature.

As in our ancient manuscripts, the absence of every kind of punctuation, and the confusion arising from words and phrases not being sufficiently separated, render the perusal of the works of Hindu authors extremely difficult. The complicated rules of orthography pertaining to some of their languages, and especially to Tamil, tend to increase this difficulty still further. Very often the most experienced person is unable to read without difficulty, especially if the writer has adhered strictly to the rules of grammar, which are generally, however, either ignored or neglected.

When Hindus write on paper they do not use a quill pen. A Brahmin could not, without defilement, touch so impure an instrument. Consequently a thin reed is used, called *kalam*, a word evidently of modern origin borrowed from the Portuguese. The *kalam* is somewhat thicker than our quill pen, and is mended in the same manner. Hindus employed under Europeans, however, lay aside these scruples, and use the same materials as their masters.

When a Hindu wishes to make up a book of the palm leaves on which he has written, he has no need of a bookbinder. He merely bores a small hole at each extremity of the leaves, and fastens them all together by means of two small pegs or sticks of wood or iron. Two thin boards, of the same length and breadth as the leaves, are then placed at the top and bottom of them, and thus form the binding or covers of the book. A long string fastened to one of the covers serves to hold the leaves together. If this plan is simple, it certainly is not convenient; for whenever one wishes to consult the book, the string must be loosened, the pegs by means of which the leaves are strung

together must be removed, and the whole volume taken to pieces.

It will thus be seen that the Hindu system of writing and of binding books closely resembles that of the ancient Romans, who wrote on extremely thin wooden boards, which they strung together and formed into a *codex*.

The following is the plan adopted by the Hindus in the transmission of letters:—They roll up the palm leaves on which they are written, and put them into an outer covering, upon which they write the address. At the junction of the two ends of the outer leaf, which are held together by means of a small incision in each, a kind of rough knot is made, serving as a seal. Due attention must be paid to the length and breadth of the leaves on which letters are written, which vary according to the rank and dignity of those to whom they are addressed.

To be the bearer of a letter denotes a kind of subordinate position. This duty cannot therefore be entrusted to superiors, or even to equals, unless they undertake it voluntarily. In the latter case, etiquette forbids the letter being given into the hands of the person who has offered to deliver it; the missive must be placed on the ground at his feet, and he picks it up and becomes responsible for its safe delivery.

The changes in the form of writing which time brings about in other countries do not offer a safe ground for conjecture in the case of Hindu manuscripts. I have seen a deed of gift written more than two hundred years ago on a plate of gold in Canarese characters, the letters of which were perfectly legible and exactly like those at present in use, the form of writing having undergone no change whatever during that long interval of time.

Nevertheless there are certain monuments in the country of very great antiquity, bearing inscriptions engraved in characters no longer in use. Some are also to be found in various places the characters of which are wholly unknown and evidently foreign. I must leave this matter to our learned philologists; as for myself, I admit that I am unable to explain the fact.

The remarks I have made above concerning the dissimilarity of the written characters and the resemblance of the gram-

matical style in the various Indian languages are equally applicable to Siamese. At least, so it has been pointed out to me by persons who are familiar with that language, and who have discovered in its alphabet an arrangement exactly similar to that of the Hindu alphabets. In some languages of India the sign or inflection denoting the vowel that always accompanies a consonant is placed before it; the same practice is followed with regard to several letters in Siamese writing. Like the Hindus, the Siamese write from left to right. This coincidence can hardly be alleged to be the result of chance; it rather indicates some common origin.

The investigations of modern authors with regard to this subject leave no doubt whatever that the *Pali* language, or the learned tongue of Siam, is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit. And this mother-tongue appears to have extended even still farther, since we find a large number of Sanskrit words in the Malay language.

However, in shape the Siamese letters as written appeared to me to bear no resemblance whatever to the Hindu alphabets with which I was acquainted.

CHAPTER XXVI

Hindu Fables.

THE Hindus are particularly fond of poetry and fiction, and their literature contains a large collection of interesting fables. Some of these fables possess a moral significance and are very popular; while others are merely stories, of no great value from a literary point of view. I have, however, selected a few stories which appeared to me calculated to interest my readers, and a collection of them will be found in the next chapter.

The fables are to be found in large numbers in various Hindu books. They are generally based on excellent moral principles, and contain some severe criticisms on the vices of men. The following I have heard related many times:—

'A traveller, having missed his way, was overtaken by darkness in the midst of a dense forest. In fear of wild beasts, he decided that the only means of escaping them would be to spend the night in the branches of one of the largest trees which he could find. He therefore climbed into a tree, and, without further thought of the dangers which might befall him, fell fast asleep, and awoke only when the rays of the morning sun warned him that it was time to continue his journey. As he was preparing to descend, he cast his eyes downwards, and espied at the foot of the tree a huge tiger eagerly and impatiently watching, as it were, for its prey. Struck with terror at the sight of the beast, the traveller remained for a while transfixed to the spot where he sat. At length, recovering himself a little and looking all round him, he observed that near the tree on which he sat were many others, with their branches so interlaced that he could easily pass from one to another, and thus escape the danger which threatened him

below. He was on the point of making his escape in this way, when, raising his eyes, he saw a huge snake hanging to the branch immediately over him, with its head nearly touching his own. The snake was apparently fast asleep, but the slightest noise might rouse it. At the sight of this twofold danger to which he found himself exposed the poor traveller lost all courage. His mind wandered, his trembling limbs could hardly support him, and he was on the point of falling into the clutches of the tiger which was watching for him below. Chilled with fright, he remained motionless in face of the cruel death that awaited him, expecting every moment to be his last. The unfortunate man, however, having somewhat recovered his senses, once more raised his eyes, and perceived, on one of the topmost branches of the tree, a honeycomb, from which sweet drops of honey were trickling down at his side. Thereupon he stretched forward his head, opened his mouth, and put out his tongue to catch the drops of honey as they fell; and in this delicious enjoyment he thought no more of the awful dangers which surrounded him.'

Besides the detached apologues to be found in their books, which they are very fond of alluding to in their everyday conversations, the Hindus have a regular collection of old and popular fables called *Pancha-tantra* (the Five Tricks), which have been translated into all the languages of the country[1]. It

[1] Two volumes of these fables, translated by the Abbé, were published in Paris in 1872 and 1877, twenty years after his death.

The East, the land of myth and legend, is the natural home of the fable, and Hindustan was the birthplace, if not of the original of these tales, at least of the oldest shape in which they still exist. The *Pancha-tantra* have been translated into almost every language, and adapted by most modern fabulists The *Kalila wa Damna* (from the names of two jackals in the first story), or fables of Bidpai or Pilpay, is an Arab version made about 760 A.D. From the Hebrew version of Rabbi Joel, John of Capua produced a Latin translation about the end of the fifteenth century, whence all later imitations are derived. The *Hitopadesa*, or 'friendly instruction,' is a modernized form of the same work, and of it there are three translations into English by Dr. Charles Wilkins, Sir William Jones, and Professor F. Johnson.

From Hindustan the Sanskrit fables passed to China, Thibet, and Persia; and they must have reached Greece at an early date, for many of the fables which passed under the name of Aesop are identical with those of the East. Aesop to us is little more than a name, though, if we may trust a passing notice in Herodotus, he must have lived in the sixth century B.C. Probably his fables were never written

is perhaps the only literary work possessed by them which is instructive and worthy of attention. All castes, without any distinction whatever, are allowed to read it. The moral of some of these fables might possibly seem dangerous, because calculated to teach how to do evil rather than how to avoid it; but, speaking generally, their teachings are praiseworthy enough.

The first of these fables of the *Pancha-tantra* explains how impostors and clever knaves succeed by artifice and falsehood in causing harm to persons whom they wish to ruin, or in sowing dissension among the most intimate of friends. The object which the author has in view appears to be to warn princes and other great personages, for whose instruction, by the way, the work seems to be principally written, against the intrigues of mean parasites and hypocritical courtiers who throng their palaces, and who, by base flattery, calumny, deceit, and intrigue, succeed in ruining and supplanting their best friends and most faithful servants.

The following is a short *résumé* of the story:—

In the city of Patali-puram there reigned a king called Suka Darusha, who had a faithful minister named Amara-Sati. This good prince had three sons, who were noted for their stupidity and vulgarity, and who were viewed by their father with the most extreme dissatisfaction. The minister Amara-Sati, conscious of the sorrow which was preying on his master, advised him to convene a general meeting of all the Brahmins of his kingdom, in order to ascertain whether there was not one amongst them who would undertake the responsibility of educating the three young princes and instilling into them feelings more worthy of their high birth. The minister's advice was followed; but of all the assembled Brahmins there was only one, named Vishnu-Sarma[1], who felt himself capable of accomplishing so difficult a task.

Vishnu-Sarma, after carefully studying the characters and dispositions of his pupils, began the work of reformation; and in order to accomplish his task, related to them a large number

down, though several are ascribed to him by Xenophon, Aristotle, Plutarch, and other Greek writers, and Plato represents Socrates as beguiling his last days by versifying such as he remembered.—ED.

[1] In the Telugu copy he is called *Soma Jenma*.—DUBOIS.

of fables, the lessons of which he took great pains to instil into their minds.

The *dramatis personae* of the first of these fables are a lion holding sway in a vast forest, a bull named Sanjivaka, and two foxes, one called Damanaka and the other Karataka, both in the service of the lion king.

The bull Sanjivaka had been accidentally lost by his master in the lion king's forest, where he was leading a peaceful, harmless life. Now the two foxes, as it happened, had been disgraced and ignominiously expelled from the court of the lion. One day the lion was quenching his thirst in the river Jumna, which flowed through the forest, when suddenly, while returning to his cave, he heard a most frightful noise like thunder, the like of which he had never heard before. It was in fact the bellowing of the bull Sanjivaka. Seized with sudden fear, and believing that an animal which was able to utter such a dreadful noise must assuredly be vastly superior to himself, the lion was consumed with dread lest a rival had come to dispute his forest kingdom. Greatly troubled in his mind, he reflected how he might get rid of this imaginary danger. While in this dilemma, a happy thought struck him: it was to reconcile himself with his former ministers, the two foxes, who might possibly help him with their advice. He therefore sent messengers to them, beseeching them to resume their former posts in his court, and promising to honour them in future with unbounded confidence.

Karataka and Damanaka, aware of the real reason of their recall to the king's court, affected the greatest indifference with regard to the offers made to them. Before complying with the request of the monarch, they calculated all the possible consequences of such a reconciliation; and with this in view they related to each other a number of stories bearing on the advantages and inconveniences that might result from their return to the king's court. Suffice it to say they at last decided to accept the lion's offer, and accordingly waited upon him.

The monarch welcomed the two foxes with much cordiality, and confessed to them the alarming fears which assailed him and the cause thereof. Without further delay he deputed them, after giving them the necessary instructions, to wait upon the rival who had caused him such uneasiness. The object of

their mission, they were informed, was to fathom the designs of this unknown personage, and, if he had come thither with hostile intentions, to inquire of him on what conditions he was willing to live in peace with the titular monarch.

The two foxes immediately went in search of the formidable Sanjivaka, and at last found him grazing peacefully on the borders of the river Jumna. At sight of him the two plenipotentiaries gazed at each other with astonishment and burst into loud fits of laughter, for they could not understand how the presence in the forest of a poor helpless bull, forsaken by his owner, could possibly cause so much anxiety to their master. After thinking the matter over, they decided to make the best of it by encouraging the lion in his fears, and thereby increasing the importance and value of their mediation. Their plan being well pondered over, they went up to the bull Sanjivaka and haughtily told him that the place he had chosen for his abode was the dominion of a lion, whose authority extended throughout the forest. They rated him severely for his daring conduct, and told him that he was running a great risk of falling a victim to the anger of the king of the forest. 'But,' added they, 'as the lion is of a generous disposition, we will persuade him to pardon you and to take you under his protection. Come along with us to him, and above all be very careful to show proper respect and humility in his presence.'

Returning to the lion, the two foxes began to make the most of their services. In their opinion the bull Sanjivaka was all that he was supposed to be; and moreover he had the reputation of being passionate, hot-tempered, distrustful, and obstinate. 'But,' added they, 'by dint of skill and persuasion we have succeeded in inducing him to be your intimate friend and faithful ally.' The bull was at this stage introduced to the lion, who deemed himself extremely fortunate in having, by the mediation of his two ministers the foxes, gained the alliance of so powerful a friend.

Sanjivaka was not long in gaining the favour of his royal master, whose full and unbounded confidence he soon won by his gentleness, obedience, and other good qualities.

Accordingly the two foxes were once more forsaken by their master, and found themselves obliged to live in obscurity and dishonour, as formerly. Sanjivaka, without even aspiring to

any such honour, had become the channel and medium through whom all favours were bestowed by the king. Thereupon Karataka and Damanaka perceived that they had made a great mistake in introducing this stranger to the lion's court. The ruin of their rival was evidently the only means by which they could hope to regain their former influence. But finding themselves too weak to get rid of their enemy by force, they resolved to achieve their object by artifice and intrigue. Accordingly they prepared themselves for the task by telling each other a great many fables, the main purpose of which was to show what one could accomplish by bringing into play at the proper season the active powers of an intriguing mind.

Having skilfully devised a plan of attack, they succeeded in finding their way once again into the king's court; and concealing their wicked intentions under a guise of zeal and attachment to their master's interests, they succeeded by dint of slander and other machinations in poisoning the mind of the lion with a deep distrust of the bull Sanjivaka. At last the king, really persuaded that his quiet and well-behaved favourite cherished the design of secretly getting rid of him, in order that he might usurp the dominion of the forest, fell upon the unfortunate Sanjivaka and tore him to pieces.

The moral of the second fable of the *Pancha-tantra* is to show the advantages of union and friendship among the weak in times of trouble or danger. It tells the story of a dove, a rat, a raven, a gazelle, and a tortoise, who, by simply helping one another, escaped the greatest dangers.

The third fable tells the story of the crows and the owls. It sets forth the dangers to which a person is exposed by confiding his private affairs to those whose character he is not well acquainted with, or to those who, after having for a long time been avowed enemies, return under the deceitful mask of friendship. It relates how a crow, by his cunning and hypocrisy, succeeded in stealing his way into the society of owls, the declared enemies of his race, and in winning their entire confidence. Thereupon, the crow made the best of this opportunity to study their habits, their resources, and their strong and weak points, until he was able to devise a safe means of attacking and exterminating them. For instance, he soon found out that their common abode was a vast cave, which possessed only on

entrance. He also discovered that his hated foes experienced insurmountable difficulty in facing the light of the sun. Furnished with this valuable information, he hastened to convene a general meeting of the crows. He counselled them all to take in their beaks as much straw, twigs, and other combustible material as they could carry and to follow him quietly. Accordingly some thousands of his fellows spread their wings and arrived at midday near the cave, where the owls, their enemies, were slumbering in fancied security. The crows heaped up before the entrance of the cave the inflammable material they had brought with them and set fire to it all. The majority of the owls were instantly suffocated by the smoke, while those which attempted to fly away perished in the flames.

A monkey and a crocodile are the characters represented in the fourth fable. It illustrates the dangers to which one is exposed by associating with wicked persons whose friendship and affection, however sincere they may appear to be to start with, result sooner or later in treachery, especially if their own interests are at stake. This is the attitude manifested by the crocodile towards his friend, the monkey, who had reposed the utmost confidence in him. The monkey, however, succeeds in evading by his cunning the treacherous plot which the crocodile devised for his destruction.

The fifth fable is about a Brahmin and his mongoose, and illustrates the imprudence of judging rashly by appearances. A Brahmin once possessed a mongoose, to which his wife and himself were very much attached. The same Brahmin had a child which was still in the cradle. One day, being obliged to leave the house on some very pressing business, and there being nobody to take care of the child, the Brahmin entrusted it to his mongoose, telling the little animal that it would have to answer with its life for any accident that might happen to the infant during his absence. As soon as the Brahmin had gone out, the mongoose took up its place quite close to the cradle, determined to perish rather than permit the slightest injury to the precious being entrusted to its care. Now it happened that a huge snake had, unobserved, found its way into the house by a crevice in the wall. Issuing from its hiding-place, it approached the cradle and prepared to attack the child. The mongoose no sooner perceived the frightful reptile than it

rushed furiously upon it, and, after a long and painful struggle, seized it by the throat, strangled it, and in its rage tore it to pieces. Soon afterwards the Brahmin returned. The mongoose, recognizing the voice of its master, ran to him and tried to express its joy by rolling at his feet, playfully biting at his legs, showing indeed every manifestation of delight at having performed such a brave deed. The Brahmin, however, having carefully examined the mongoose, and finding it covered with the blood which had flowed from the wounds of the serpent, rashly concluded that the blood could only be that of his infant child, whom, as he thought, the mongoose had killed; and, in a fit of rage, he seized a thick stick which was close by and killed the poor animal on the spot.

However, what were his grief and despair when on entering the room where he had left his child, he found it calmly sleeping; while around the cradle were the scattered remains of the huge snake which the mongoose had just killed! He bitterly reproached himself for his imprudence and rashness, but, alas! too late; and was grieved sorely at the thought that he had inconsiderately sacrificed the poor animal, to whom alone he was indebted for the preservation of his beloved son[1].

The author of the *Pancha-tantra* has introduced into these five principal fables a large number of minor fables which are related by the respective characters to each other. Some of these latter resemble those of Aesop, but are far more prolix. The *Pancha-tantra* is so constructed that one fable, before it is finished, suggests another, which in its turn suggests a third, and so on. A great deal of ingenuity is displayed in this plan of narration; but the continuous dovetailing of one story into another is very wearisome to the reader, who sometimes loses sight altogether of the beginning of a story, which only ends later on in the work.

A literal translation of a few of these fables will give my readers a fair idea of the rest of them. The following are extracted from the first part of the *Pancha-tantra*:—

[1] A tale exactly similar to this has been long current in Europe. It has been told both in story-books and pictures. The circumstances are exactly the same, with the exception that the animal which fell a victim to the rashness of its master is a dog instead of a mongoose.—DUBOIS.

The Adventures of the Brahmin Kala-Sarma.

The Brahmin and the Crab.

Once upon a time, in the city of Soma-Puri, there lived a Brahmin named Kala-Sarma, who, after existing for a long time in penury, suddenly found himself raised to opulence by a happy combination of circumstances. He thereupon resolved to undertake a pilgrimage to the holy city of Benares, there to obtain pardon for all his sins by bathing in the waters of the sacred Ganges. On his way thither, he one day reached the river Sarasvati, flowing through a desert which he was crossing. He determined to perform his usual ablutions in it; and no sooner had he stepped into the water than he saw coming towards him a crab, which asked him where he was going. Learning that he was on a pilgrimage to the Ganges, the crab requested the Brahmin to carry it with him to this sacred river, promising in return for this service to remember his kindness all its life, and to do all that lay in its power to be of use to him should an opportunity offer itself. The Brahmin, astonished at the crab's promise, asked how a creature so weak and despicable as itself could possibly be of any service to a man, and especially to a Brahmin. To this the crab replied by the following fable :—

The King, the Elephant, and the Brahmin.

In the city of Prabavathi-Patna there lived a king named Adita-Varma. One day the king, when out hunting with a crowd of attendants in the midst of a dense forest, observed a huge elephant approaching, whose sudden appearance spread terror among his followers. The king, however, succeeded in calming the fears of his people, and told them that they must try to capture the animal and lead it away to his palace. Accordingly, they dug a deep pit, covering it with branches and leaves. This done, the whole company surrounded the elephant, leaving only one passage leading to the pit for him to escape, into which, in fact, the elephant eventually fell. The king was delighted at their success, and told them that before trying to release the elephant from the pit they must keep it starving there for eight days, when, having lost all its strength,

it might be more easily made captive. Accordingly, everybody retired, leaving the elephant in the trap. Two days afterwards, a Brahmin who was travelling on the banks of the river Jumna happened to pass that way, and seeing the elephant in the pit, asked the animal by what unfortunate accident it found itself there. The elephant told him about its sad adventure, complaining at the same time of the torments which it was enduring, not only from the fall, but by hunger and thirst. It besought the Brahmin to have pity and to help it to regain its liberty. The Brahmin replied that it was quite beyond his physical powers to drag out from such a deep pit a body of such huge weight and bulk. But the elephant still further entreated him, and besought him at any rate to give it the benefit of his advice as to how it was possible to escape from the dangers which threatened it. To this the Brahmin replied that if it had formerly rendered service to anybody, it should now invoke that person's aid. 'I do not remember,' answered the elephant, 'to have rendered service to any one except to the rats, which I did in the following manner :—

The Elephant and the Rats.

'In the country of Kalinga-Desa there lived a king named Swarna-Bahu[1], who suddenly found his kingdom infested with myriads of rats, which destroyed every living plant and spread desolation everywhere. His subjects, unable to subsist in the midst of such a plague, waited upon the king and entreated him to devise some means of freeing the country from the ravages of these destructive creatures. The king immediately mustered all the hunters and trappers in his kingdom, who, furnished with nets and snares of all kinds, proceeded at once to make war on the rats. By dint of much labour and patience, they succeeded at last in drawing all the rats from their holes, every one of them being captured and shut up alive in large earthen vessels, where they were left to perish of hunger.

'Meanwhile,' continued the elephant, 'I happened to be passing by the spot where the rats were huddled up in confinement. Their chief, hearing me coming, called out to me and entreated me to have compassion on him and his com-

[1] Swarna-Bahu means 'golden-armed.'—ED.

panions and to save their lives, which, said he, was extremely easy, since all that was necessary was to kick to pieces the earthen vessels which held them captive. Touched with pity at the sad lot of these unfortunate creatures, I shattered their temporary prisons, and thus rescued them all from certain death. The chief of the rats, after thanking me profusely, promised that he and his companions would for ever remember the signal service I had rendered them, and swore that they would requite my kindness should I ever happen to get into any difficulty.'

When the elephant had finished its story, the Brahmin advised it to call to its aid the rats, whom it had so signally helped. He then wished it a speedy deliverance and proceeded on his journey.

The elephant, left to itself, concluded it could not do better than follow the advice given by the Brahmin. At the call of the elephant, the chief of the rats immediately ran to its aid. No sooner did the elephant perceive its little friend than it explained the misfortunes that had befallen it, as well as the troubles with which it was still threatened, and entreated the rat to help it somehow or other out of its prison.

'The service which thou standest in need of, my lord elephant,' answered the rat, 'presents no difficulties to me; be, therefore, of good courage, and I promise to effect thy deliverance very shortly.'

The chief of the rats immediately assembled several millions of its subjects, and led them to the pit where their liberator was buried. They set to work at once to burrow all round, throwing the earth into the pit, which gradually filled little by little until the elephant was able to reach the surface and shake itself free from all danger.

At the close of this fable the crab thus addressed the Brahmin: 'If a rat was able to render such a signal service to an elephant, is it not possible that an opportunity might occur when I might be in a position to oblige thee and to testify my gratitude to thee?'

The Brahmin Kala-Sarma, delighted at finding so much intelligence in such an insignificant creature, no longer hesitated to take the crab with him, and putting it in his travelling bag, proceeded on his journey. One day, while traversing a dense

forest at midday, when the sun was hottest, he halted to rest beneath the shade of a thick tree, where he soon fell asleep; and this is what happened while he was buried in deep slumber:—

The Crow, the Serpent, the Brahmin, and the Crab.

Near the tree under which the Brahmin Kala-Sarma was enjoying his peaceful slumber, a huge snake had taken up its abode in a white-ant heap, and in the branches of the same tree a crow had built its nest. Now the crow and the serpent had, in the capacity of neighbours, contracted a close alliance. When any wearied traveller happened to rest under the shade of the tree, the crow by a certain cry gave notice immediately to its friend the snake, and the latter, forthwith emerging from its retreat, quietly approached the traveller and bit him, causing instantaneous death. Thereupon the crow would call its fellow-crows together, and the whole of them would fall upon the corpse and devour it.

No sooner had the crow perceived that the Brahmin pilgrim was sound asleep than it gave the serpent notice by the usual signal. The snake immediately issued from its retreat and bit the Brahmin, killing him instantly by its deadly venom. The crow hastened to summon its friends and relations, and the whole of them pounced together on the corpse. But as they were preparing to devour it, the head crow espied something moving in the bag of the traveller, and curious to know what it was, put its head into the bag. Thereupon the crab caught it by the neck with its claws and proceeded to strangle it to death. The crow cried aloud for mercy, but the crab swore that it would not let go, unless the Brahmin whose death the crow had just caused was restored to life. The crow made known to its companions the extremity in which it found itself and the conditions under which the crab agreed to spare its life. It besought its comrades to go in all haste and tell its friend the snake of its critical situation, and to request it to reanimate the body of the Brahmin without delay. The snake, informed of the misfortune that had befallen its friend, approached the deceased, applied its mouth to the spot where it had bitten him, sucked out all the venom with which it had poisoned him, and restored him to life.

When the Brahmin regained his senses he was not a little

surprised to see his crab holding a crow fast imprisoned in its claws. The crab gave him an account of what had just happened, at which the traveller, who had believed himself to be waking from a sweet slumber, was exceedingly amazed. 'However,' said he to the crab, 'since the crow has satisfied the conditions which thou didst ask of him, thou must also fulfil the promise which thou madest to him of sparing his life; let him, therefore, go now.'

But the crab, desiring to punish the wicked crow in a proper manner, and fearing to carry out its design in the neighbourhood of the snake, answered that it would set its captive free only at some distance from the spot where they were. The Brahmin, therefore, carried them both a little farther on, and then, opening his bag, told the crab to hesitate no longer in fulfilling his promise.

'Foolish man!' answered the crab, 'can we attach the least faith to the words of the wicked? Can we ever rely on their promises? Thou art, of course, ignorant of the fact that this treacherous crow has already caused the death of a host of innocent beings, and that if I now set him free he will cause a still greater number to perish. Wouldst thou like to know what good people gain by obliging the wicked? Wouldst thou like to learn how the latter ought to be treated when once they are in our power? The following fable will teach thee:—

The Brahmin, the Crocodile, the Tree, the Cow, and the Fox.

'Once upon a time, in the Brahmin village of Agni-sthala, situated on the banks of the river Jumna, there lived a Brahmin named Astika. While on a pilgrimage to the Ganges, he happened one day to reach a river in which he intended to perform his ablutions. No sooner had he stepped into the water than a crocodile approached him, and learning the purpose for which he had undertaken the journey, entreated him most earnestly to carry it with him to the waters of the sacred river, where it hoped to be able to live more at its ease than in that river, which frequently ran dry during the hot season and caused it the most terrible sufferings. The Brahmin, moved to compassion, allowed the crocodile to get into his bag, and, hoisting it on his shoulders, proceeded on his journey. On reaching the banks of the Ganges the pilgrim opened his

bag, and pointing out to the crocodile the waters of the river, bade it crawl in. The crocodile, however, replied that it felt tired out by the long journey they had made together, and was not strong enough to reach the water by itself. It therefore requested the Brahmin to carry it in to a certain depth. The Brahmin, without the least suspicion of foul play, complied with this last request of the crocodile. He advanced as far as he could into the bed of the river and there deposited his travelling companion. Just as he was turning, however, the crocodile seized him by the leg and tried to drag him into deeper water. Filled with dismay, and incensed at such perfidy, the pilgrim exclaimed: "O deceitful and wicked villain! Is it thus that thou returnest evil for good? Is this the kind of honesty which thou practisest? Is this the gratitude which I have to expect from thee for the service I have rendered?"

'"Nonsense!" replied the crocodile. "Why dost thou talk to me of *honesty* and *gratitude*? The only honesty of our days is to ruin those who cherish us."

'"Be pleased, at any rate, to stay the execution of thy perfidious design for a little while," entreated the Brahmin, "and let us see if the morality which thou professest would be approved by anybody. Let us refer the matter to arbitrators; and should there be found only three who approve thy mode of acting and thinking, I consent to be devoured by thee."

'The crocodile yielded to the wishes of the Brahmin, and agreed to defer the sacrifice until it had secured the approbation of three arbitrators who saw nothing to blame in it.

'They applied first of all to a mango-tree planted on the river bank. The Brahmin asked the tree if it was right to do evil to those who had done us good.

'"I do not know," answered the mango-tree, "if that is permitted or not; but I know very well that it is just the kind of treatment which men like you mete out to me. I appease their hunger by nourishing them with my succulent fruits; and I shield them from the heat of the sun by sheltering them under my shade. Yet, as soon as old age or any accident makes me unfit to render them such services, they, forgetting my past kindness, cut my branches and lastly deprive me of life itself by digging up my very roots. Hence I conclude that honesty among men consists in destroying those who cherish them."

'The crocodile and the Brahmin then accosted an old cow which was grazing without a keeper on the banks of the river. The Brahmin asked if it was not an offence against honesty to do evil to those who had done good to us.

'"What dost thou mean by the word *honesty*?" answered the cow. "Honesty in our days consists in harming those who have rendered us service; I have learned this only too well from my own sad experience. Till recently I rendered most important services to man. I ploughed his fields; I gave him calves; I nourished him with my milk. But, alas! now that I am grown old and unfit to be of service to him, he has discarded me. Forsaken and helpless on the banks of this river, I find myself exposed at every moment to the fury of wild beasts."

'The opinion of a third arbitrator only was wanting to complete the ruin of the Brahmin. Perceiving a fox, he asked him the same question that he had asked the mango-tree and the cow. But before making an answer the fox wished to be better informed of the points at issue. So the Brahmin gave a detailed account of the services he had rendered to the crocodile and of the treacherous act that the latter was meditating. The fox laughed heartily, and seemed at first to be going to decide in favour of the crocodile. "However," said he, "before pronouncing a final judgement on your affair, I must see how you both travelled together."

'The crocodile, without the least suspicion as to what the fox intended to do, and without the least hesitation, got into the bag, which the Brahmin then hoisted upon his back. The fox told the Brahmin to follow him, and on reaching an isolated spot he made signs to the Brahmin to place his load on the ground. No sooner had the latter done so than the fox took a huge stone and smashed the head of the crocodile with it. Then turning to the Brahmin, the fox said: "Foolish man that thou art, may the dangers to which thou hast been exposing thyself teach thee to be more careful in future! Remember well that we should never make friends or associates of the wicked." The fox then called his family together and made an excellent meal of the dead crocodile; and the Brahmin, after accomplishing the object of his pilgrimage by bathing in the waters of the Ganges, returned home safe and sound.

'This fable,' said the crab to his benefactor the Brahmin, who

was attentively listening to his narrative, 'ought to convince thee that no covenant should be made with the wicked, and that we may without the least scruple fail in our word to them. When we happen to have them in our power, we should ruthlessly destroy them.' Saying this, the crab tightened its clasp on the crow and strangled it to death.

After this exhibition of exemplary punishment the Brahmin Kala-Sarma, taking up the crab again, continued his journey; and when he reached the river Ganges, deposited his little benefactor there, as desired. After expressing his deep gratitude for the signal service the crab had rendered to him in saving his life, he performed his ablutions in the sacred river and returned to his own country, which he reached without further accident.

I will not relate any more of these fables, though most of them are very instructive. My intention has been merely to draw the attention of my readers to a work which, in my opinion, is the most interesting and useful in the whole range of Hindu literature.

It is impossible to determine the age of these fables, since no authentic evidence of their date is now extant. It is supposed that they were translated into Persian towards the middle of the sixth century, under the reign of the Emperor Nurjehan; and the fragments which have been published in Europe have, no doubt, been extracted from this Persian translation. Indeed, La Fontaine himself appears to have gone to it for some of his fables.

The Hindus themselves place the *Pancha-tantra* among their oldest literary productions; and the wide popularity which it enjoys may be said to be some proof in favour of this opinion. At any rate the fables contained in this work appear to be older than those of Aesop. It is uncertain what was the birthplace of that fabulist; whence we may suppose that he learnt from the Hindu philosophers the art of making animals and inanimate beings speak, with the view of teaching mankind their faults.

It is uncertain whether these fables were originally composed by the Brahmin Vishnu-Sarma in verse or in prose. They were most probably in verse, as that was the recognized mode of composition in ancient India. It is at any rate certain that

copies exist of the *Pancha-tantra* written in Sanskrit verse. Thence they may have been translated into prose for the instruction and amusement of those to whom the poetic language was not familiar.

The five principal fables, together with the great number of minor tales interwoven in them, form a volume of considerable size.

It is not surprising that such a work should have an extensive popularity among a people like the Hindus, prone to fiction and admiring the marvellous. Nor is it necessary, in order to charm an imaginative people like the Hindus, to exhibit any particular wit or erudition. There are numbers of Hindus who make it their sole profession to wander from one place to another relating fables and stories which are very often utterly devoid even of common sense. Men of the shepherd caste in particular often earn a livelihood in this manner. Hence the saying, *It is a shepherd's tale,* which is frequently used by the Hindus to show that a story is incredible.

CHAPTER XXVII

Hindu Tales.

The Four Deaf Men.

ONCE upon a time a shepherd, who happened to be deaf, was tending his flock near his village. Though it was past midday, his wife had not yet brought him his breakfast. He was afraid to leave his sheep to fetch his food lest some accident should befall them; and so, after waiting some time longer, and being pressed by hunger, he adopted the following course. There chanced to be a *taliari,* or village watchman, cutting grass for his cow on the banks of a neighbouring stream, so the shepherd went up to him, though rather reluctantly, for men of this class, although placed as guardians over public and private property in the village and supposed to prevent any thefts being committed, are, generally speaking, great thieves themselves. The shepherd, nevertheless, requested him to keep an eye on his flock during the short time he would be absent, and assured him that on his return from breakfast he would reward him handsomely for his trouble.

Now the *taliari* happened to be as deaf as the shepherd himself, and not understanding a word of what was being spoken to him, answered angrily as follows:—

'What right hast thou to this grass, which I have been at such trouble to cut? Is my cow to starve, while thy sheep are being fattened at its expense? Go about thy business and let me alone!' As he finished speaking he made an expressive motion with his hand, which the shepherd understood as a signal of compliance with his request. The latter, therefore, immediately ran towards the village, fully determined to give his wife a good trouncing for her neglect. But he had no sooner reached

his home than he saw his wife stretched in the doorway and rolling in the agonies of a violent colic, the result of eating a quantity of raw beans.

At the sight of the sufferings of his poor wife the anger of the shepherd vanished, although he saw to his chagrin that the necessity of rendering her help and of preparing his own breakfast would detain him longer than he had expected. Distrusting the honesty of the *taliari*, to whom he had confided the care of his flock, he made all possible haste, and finally returned. On reaching his sheep, which he found peacefully grazing at some distance from the spot where he had left them, his first thought was to count them; and overjoyed at finding that there was not a single one missing, he exclaimed: 'This *taliari* is a really honest fellow! He is the very jewel of his class. I promised him a reward, and he shall indeed have one.'

Now there was a lame sheep in the flock, which was however sound enough in other respects, and so he put it on his shoulders and carried it to the *taliari*, saying to him: 'Thou didst indeed watch my flock very carefully during my absence; well, here is a sheep which thou shalt have as a reward for thy trouble.' But the *taliari*, catching sight of the lame sheep, exclaimed angrily: 'What dost thou mean by accusing me of having broken thy sheep's leg? I swear that I have not stirred from the spot where thou now seest me; I have not gone near thy flock!'

'Yes,' answered the shepherd, 'it is nice and fat; it will furnish a good feast for thy family and friends.'

'Have I not told thee,' replied the *taliari* in a rage, 'that I never went near thy sheep? and yet thou accusest me of having broken the leg of one of them! Get away from here, or I will give thee a sound thrashing.' And he showed by his gestures that he was determined to put his threats into execution.

The shepherd, perceiving at last that his friend was getting into a passion, and unable to understand the cause of this unjust provocation, put himself into an attitude of defence. The pair were all but coming to blows, when a man on horseback happened to pass by. They thereupon stopped the rider; and the shepherd, laying hold of the bridle, said to him: 'Sir, kindly listen for a moment and say whether it is I who am in the wrong in this dispute. I want to present this man with a sheep as

a reward for a small service which he has rendered me, and he falls upon me and wishes to fight me.'

The *taliari*, speaking in his turn, said: 'This dolt of a shepherd dares to accuse me of having broken the leg of one of his sheep, whereas I did not even go near his flock.'

Now the horseman to whom they had appealed as arbitrator was even more deaf than they were, and not understanding a word of what was spoken to him, replied: 'Yes, I confess that this horse does not really belong to me. I found him straying on the roadside; I was in a hurry, and I mounted him so that I might get along faster. If he belongs to you, take him by all means; but let me continue my way, for I have no time to lose.'

The shepherd and the *taliari*, each imagining that the rider had decided in favour of his adversary, became more violent than ever, cursing him whom they had chosen as their arbitrator, and accusing him roundly of partiality.

At this crisis an aged Brahmin chanced to pass by, and as he appeared more fit to settle their differences they stopped him and requested him to listen to them for a moment. Shepherd, *taliari*, and horseman all spoke together at the same time, each telling his own tale and explaining to the Brahmin the subject of the dispute, and requesting him to decide which of them was in the wrong.

The Brahmin, who was as deaf as the other three, replied: 'Yes, yes, I quite understand you. My wife has sent you all to prevent my going away, and to persuade me to return home; but I have quite made up my mind, and you will not succeed in your attempt. Now, do you all know my wife? She is a real shrew! It is impossible for me to live any longer with such a harridan! Ever since the time I had the misfortune to buy[1] her, she has made me commit more sins than it will be possible for me to expiate in a hundred regenerations. I am therefore going on a pilgrimage to Kasi (Benares), and on reaching the holy city I mean to wash myself in the sacred waters of the Ganges, in order that I may purify myself from the innumerable sins which her wickedness has caused me to commit. I have furthermore made up my mind to live henceforth by alms in a foreign country, and apart from her.'

[1] I have previously remarked that 'to marry' and 'to buy a woman' are synonymous terms among the Hindus. —DUBOIS.

While they were all four shouting thus at the top of their voices, without being able to understand each other, the rider perceived at a distance some people rapidly approaching them. Fearing lest they might be the owners of the horse which he had taken, he immediately dismounted and took to his heels.

The shepherd, finding suddenly that it was getting late, hastened back to his flock, which had strayed away some distance, uttering curses as he trudged along against all arbitrators, and complaining loudly that there was no more justice on the earth. Finally he attributed all the troubles and disappointments he had experienced that day to the fact that a snake had crossed his path [1] in the morning.

The *taliari* turned to his load of grass; and finding the lame sheep there, took it up on his shoulders and carried it away home, to punish the shepherd, as he thought, for the unjust quarrel he had fastened on him.

As for the aged Brahmin, he continued his way till he reached a neighbouring *choultry*, where he stopped to spend the night. Quiet rest and sound sleep dispelled the feelings of anger and ill-humour which he had cherished against his wife, and the next morning several Brahmins, relatives and friends of his, came in search of him, and having found him, succeeded at last in soothing his temper and persuading him to return home, promising to use their best endeavours to render his wife more obedient and less quarrelsome in future.

The Four Foolish Brahmins.

In a certain district proclamation had been made of a *samaradhanam*, one of those grand feasts given to Brahmins on divers occasions. Four individuals of this caste, having each set out from a different village to attend the feast, happened to meet each other on the road, and having discovered that they were all proceeding to the same place, agreed to travel together during the remainder of their journey. While thus walking along in company, they were met by a soldier going in the opposite direction, who, on passing them, greeted them with the saluta-

[1] This, as I have already pointed out, is one of the most evil omens.—DUBOIS.

tion generally made to Brahmins; that is, he joined his hands together, put them to his forehead, and said: '*Saranam ayya*!' ('Respectful greeting to you, my lord!') to which the four Brahmins replied at one and the same time: '*Asirvadam*!' ('Our blessing!').

Subsequently they reached a well by the roadside, and there they sat down to quench their thirst and to rest for a while under the shade of a neighbouring tree. While thus occupied, and finding no better subject of conversation, one of them took it into his head to break the silence by saying to the others: 'You will admit that the soldier whom we have just met was a man of exceptional politeness and discernment. Did you not remark how he singled me out, and how carefully he saluted me?'

'It was not you whom he saluted,' replied the Brahmin seated next to him, 'it was to me particularly that he addressed his greeting.'

'You are both mistaken,' exclaimed the third. 'I can assure you that the greeting was addressed to me alone; and the proof is that when the soldier said his "*Saranam ayya*," he cast his eyes upon me!'

'Not at all,' replied the fourth. 'It was I only he saluted; otherwise, should I have answered him as I did, by saying "*Asirvadam*"?'

The altercation grew so warm that the four travellers were at last on the point of coming to blows, when one of them, the least stupid of the four, wishing to prevent so silly a quarrel proceeding to extremes, cried as follows:—'What fools we are to be thus quarrelling for no purpose! After heaping on each other all the insults we are capable of, and after fighting with each other like the Sudra rabble, shall we be any nearer to the solution of our differences? The fittest person to settle the controversy, I think, is he who occasioned it. The soldier cannot have gone very far. Let us, therefore, run after him as quickly as we can, and ascertain from him which of us four it was whom he intended to salute.'

This advice, appearing sound to all of them, was immediately followed. Accordingly, the four set off in pursuit of the soldier, and at last, quite out of breath, overtook him about a league beyond the place where he had saluted them. No sooner had they caught sight of him than they cried out to him to stop; and

before they had quite reached him had put him in full possession of the points of their dispute, requesting him to settle it by saying to which of them he had directed his salutation.

The soldier, instantly perceiving the character of the people he had to deal with, and wishing to amuse himself a little at their expense, coolly replied that he intended his salutation for the greatest fool of the four, and then, turning his back on them, continued his journey.

The Brahmins, confounded with this answer, turned back and continued their journey for some time in perfect silence. But the greeting of the soldier had taken so strong a hold of them that at last they could remain silent no longer. The quarrel was therefore renewed with greater fury than before. The point at issue this time was as to which of the four was entitled to the distinction mentioned by the soldier, inasmuch as each claimed to be the greatest fool of the party.

The dispute as to who had the right to claim this extraordinary distinction grew so hot and strong that a hand-to-hand scuffle seemed inevitable. However, the one who had advised conciliation once before again wisely interposed with the view of making peace, and spoke as follows :—

'I think myself the greatest fool of us all, and each of you thinks the same thing of himself. Now, I ask you, is it by screaming at the top of our voices and by dealing each other blows that we shall arrive at a decision as to which of the four is the greatest fool? No, certainly not; let us therefore put an end to our quarrel for the time. Here we are within a short distance of Dharmapuri; let us go thither and present ourselves at the *choultry* (the court of justice), and request the authorities to settle our dispute[1].' As this advice seemed sensible enough, they all agreed to adopt it.

They could not have arrived at the *choultry* at a more opportune moment. The authorities of the village of Dharmapuri, consisting of Brahmins and others, were just then all assembled there; and as there was no other important case to be settled that day, they at once proceeded with the hearing of the cause of the strangers, who were asked to explain the facts of their case.

[1] Most Indian villages even to this day possess a *chavadi* or *choultry*, where the village authorities meet and dispense justice.—ED.

One of the four thereupon advanced into the middle of the assembly and related, without omitting the slightest detail, all that had happened in connexion with the greeting of the soldier and his ambiguous reply.

On hearing the details of the case the whole court burst into fits of laughter. The president, who was a man of humorous disposition, was delighted at having found so favourable an opportunity of amusing himself. Assuming, therefore, a grave demeanour and ordering every one to keep silent, he thus addressed the suitors: 'As you are strangers and quite unknown in this town, it is impossible that the point at issue, namely, who is the greatest fool, can be proved by the evidence of witnesses. There is only one way that I can see in which you can enlighten your judges. Let each of you in his turn disclose to us some incident of his life on which he considers he can best establish his claim to egregious folly. After hearing you all in turn, we can then decide as to which of the four has a right to superiority in this respect, and which of you can in consequence claim for himself exclusively the soldier's greeting.'

All the suitors having agreed to this proposal, one of the Brahmins obtained permission to speak, and addressed the assembly as follows:—'I am very poorly clad, as you doubtless see, and my ragged condition does not date from to-day. I will tell you how I came to be so shabbily attired. Many years ago a rich merchant of our neighbourhood, who was always very charitable towards Brahmins, presented me with two pieces of the finest cloth that had ever been seen in our *agraharam* (village). I showed them to all my friends, who never failed to admire them greatly. "A beautiful present like that," said they to me, "can only be the reward of good deeds performed in a previous birth." Before putting them on I washed them, according to the usual custom, in order to purify them from the defilement of the weaver's and merchant's touch. Now, they were hanging up to dry with the ends fastened to two branches of a tree, when a dog happening to come that way ran under them. I caught sight of the vile animal only after it had got some distance away, and I was therefore not quite sure whether it had touched my cloths and thus polluted them. I asked my children who were close by about it, but they said they had not

noticed the dog. How, then, was I to make sure about the matter? Well, I decided to go down on all-fours till I was about the height of the dog; and in this posture I crawled under the cloths. "Did I touch them?" I asked my children, who were watching me. They answered, "No," and I leapt with joy at the happy result. Nevertheless, a moment later it struck me that the dog might possibly have touched them with his tail. So to be quite sure of this, I fastened an upturned sickle on my back, and then, again crawling along on all-fours, I passed a second time under the cloths. My children, whom I had asked to watch carefully, told me that this time the sickle had just touched the cloths. Not doubting in the least that the end of the dog's tail must have also touched the cloths in the same way, I laid hold of them, and, in a fit of thoughtless rage, tore them to pieces. The occurrence soon became known to everybody in the neighbourhood, and I was everywhere voted to be a fool. "Even if the dog really defiled thy cloths," said one, "couldst thou not have removed the defilement by washing them a second time?" Another asked why I had not given the cloths to some poor Sudra instead of tearing them to pieces. "Who would dream of giving you cloths again after such senseless folly on your part?" This last remark, I may add, has proved only too true; for ever since then, whenever I ventured to apply to anybody for a present of cloths, the usual reply has been that I simply wanted them to tear to pieces.'

When he had finished his story, one of the auditors remarked to him: 'You seem to be very clever at crawling about on all-fours.' 'Yes, I am indeed very clever at it,' answered the Brahmin, 'as you shall see.' And, suiting his action to his words, he went down on all-fours, and proceeded to run two or three times round the spectators, who were splitting their sides with laughter.

'Enough, enough!' cried the president. 'All that we have heard and seen furnishes evidence very much in your favour, but before coming to any decision we must hear what the others have to say for themselves.'

A second Brahmin accordingly spoke as follows:—

'One day, in order to present a decent appearance at a *sama-radhanam* (treat to Brahmins), which had been announced in our neighbourhood, I called in the barber to shave my head

and chin. When he had finished, I told my wife to give him a copper coin for his trouble; but by mistake she gave him two. In vain did I request the barber to return me the other coin. He was obstinate, and refused to do so; and the more I insisted on his returning it, the more stubborn did he become. The dispute was becoming very serious when the barber, assuming a milder tone, observed: "There is only one way of settling the difference between us. For the extra coin which you ask me to return I will shave your wife's head as well, if that suits you." "Certainly," answered I, after a moment's reflection; "your proposal will, doubtless, put an end to our quarrel without unfairness on either side."

'My wife, hearing what was about to happen to her, wished to run away; but I laid hold of her and made her sit down, while the barber, armed with his razor, completely shaved her head. My wife kept crying out most bitterly the whole time, abusing and cursing both of us; but I let her rave, for I preferred seeing her head clean shaven to giving this villain of a barber money which he had not rightly earned. My wife, deprived thus of her beautiful hair, immediately hid herself through sheer shame, and dared not appear again. The barber also decamped, and meeting my mother in the street, related to her with infinite gusto what had just taken place. She at once hastened to the house to assure herself of the fact, and when she saw her daughter-in-law completely shorn, she stood motionless and dumbfounded for a moment, and then, flying into a fit of anger, overwhelmed me with curses and insults, which I bore patiently without uttering a word, for I soon began to feel that I richly deserved them. The villain of a barber, in his turn, took a mischievous pleasure in telling everybody of the incident, until I became the general laughing-stock. Slanderous people, improving on his story, were not slow in insinuating that the object of my having my wife's head shaved was to punish her for her infidelity. Crowds gathered about the door of my house, and even an ass was brought to carry the supposed adulteress through the streets in the manner usual on such occasions.

'A report of the affair soon reached the ears of my wife's relatives, who hastened to inquire what was the matter. You can easily imagine the terrible hubbub and trouble they made

at the sight of their unfortunate daughter. They immediately took her away with them, travelling at night that she might be spared the shame of being exposed to public view in so humiliating a condition, and they kept her for four years without coming to terms of any kind with me, though at length they restored her to me.

'This unfortunate incident made me miss the *samaradhanam*, for which I had been preparing by a three days' fast. I was all the more chagrined to find afterwards that it was a most sumptuous feast, and that ghee, among other good things, had been profusely served. A fortnight afterwards another *samaradhanam* was announced, which I had the imprudence to attend. I was greeted with howls from more than eight hundred Brahmins who had assembled there, and who, seizing me by force, insisted on my publishing the name of the accomplice of my wife's guilt, in order that he might be prosecuted and punished according to the rigid rules of the caste. I solemnly asserted that I was myself the guilty party, and explained to them all the true motive that induced me to act in such a manner. My hearers were immensely surprised at what I told them, and, looking at each other, at last exclaimed: "Is it possible that any married woman who has not violated the laws of honour should have her head shaved? This man must be either a downright impostor or the greatest fool on the face of the earth." And I hope, gentlemen,' said the narrator in conclusion, 'that you too will think the same, and that you will consider my folly to have been far superior to that of the Brahmin who tore his cloths to pieces.'

The assembly agreed that the speaker had put forward a very strong case; but justice required that the other two should also be heard.

The third claimant, who was burning with impatience to speak, addressed the court as follows:—

'My name was originally Anantayya, but I am now known everywhere as *Betel Anantayya*, and here follows the reason why this nickname was given me.

'My wife had been living with me for about a month, after having remained for a long time at her father's house on account of her youth, when one night on going to bed I told her—I know not for what reason—that all women were chatterboxes.

She at once angrily retorted that she knew some men who were as much chatterboxes as women. I saw at once that she was alluding to myself; and feeling extremely piqued at the sharpness of her retort, I said: "Now, just let us see which of us two will speak the first!" "Certainly," quoth she: "but what shall the loser forfeit?" "A betel-leaf[1]," answered I; and the wager being thus made, we both went to sleep without uttering another word.

'The next morning, when the sun was already pretty high, and there were no signs of our appearing, the other people in the house called out to each of us by name, but received no answer. They shouted louder still, and still there was silence. Then they knocked violently at the door of our room; but to no purpose. Finally, everybody in the house became thoroughly alarmed, suspecting that we had both died suddenly during the night. The carpenter of the village was accordingly sent for in hot haste. He was soon on the spot with his tools, and promptly broke open the door of our room.

'Judge of the surprise of all when they found both of us wide awake and in the apparent enjoyment of the best of health, but deprived of the use of speech. Various means were adopted to induce us to speak, but without success. My mother, who was greatly alarmed, gave loud vent to her grief, and all the Brahmins of the village, both men and women, flocked to our house to learn what all the noise was about. The house was soon filled with people, and each drew his own conclusions as to the accident which was supposed to have befallen us. The prevailing opinion was that it all resulted from the curse of some secret enemy. Accordingly, my relatives forthwith sent for a famous magician living in the neighbourhood to counteract the spell. As soon as he arrived he began by fixing his eyes on us for some moments. Then he walked round us several times, uttering strange words, felt different parts of our bodies, and did so many other strange things that the remembrance of them still makes me laugh whenever I think of them. At last he declared that we were really under the influence of a spell. He even named the evil spirit which, according to him, possessed us, and described it as very obstinate and uncontrollable. Considering the difficulties that he would have in expelling it, he stated that

[1] Thirty or forty of these leaves could be had for a farthing.—DUBOIS.

five pagodas at least would be required to meet the expenses of the sacrifices and other ceremonies that must be performed if he was to be successful.

'My relatives, who were by no means well-to-do people, were utterly dismayed at the exorbitant sum demanded by the magician; but rather than allow us to remain dumb, they agreed to his terms, and promised moreover to give him a suitable present if he succeeded in restoring to us the use of our tongues.

'The magician was on the point of beginning his mystic ceremonies, when one of our Brahmin friends who was present maintained, in opposition to everybody else, that what we were suffering from was a simple malady enough, such as he had often seen before, and he undertook to cure us without any expense whatever. For this purpose all that he required was a plate of red-hot charcoal and a small bar of gold. As soon as these had been brought he heated the bar of gold almost to melting-point; then taking it up with pincers, he applied it red hot to the soles of my feet, below my elbows, on the pit of my stomach, and lastly on the top of my head. I endured these cruel tortures without showing the smallest symptom of pain or uttering the least complaint. Indeed, I would rather have died, if necessary, than lose the bet I had made. "Now let us try the remedy on the woman," said the shrewd operator, who was rather discouraged at my firmness. He then approached my wife and applied the red-hot bar of gold to the soles of her feet. But no sooner did she feel the effects of the burning than she quickly drew away her leg, and cried out, "*Appah*! *Appah*!" (Enough! Enough!). Then, turning towards me, she said: "I have lost the wager; here is your betel-leaf." "Did I not tell you," said I, taking the leaf, "that you would be the first to speak? You thus prove by your own conduct that I was right in saying last night, when we went to bed, that women are chatterboxes."

'The spectators, thoroughly astounded, were gazing at each other without understanding anything, until I explained to them the wager we had made overnight before going to sleep. "What downright folly!" they all exclaimed together. "What!" said they, "was it for a leaf of betel that you spread this alarm in your own house and through the whole village? Was it

for a leaf of betel that you showed such courage in allowing yourself to be burnt from the feet to the head? Never in the whole world was there seen such stupid folly." And from that time I have always gone by the name of *Betel Anantayya*.'

This story appeared to the assembly remarkable enough as illustrating extraordinary foolishness; but it was only fair, they said, that they should hear the claims that the fourth suitor had to put forward. And he, having been granted permission to speak, thus addressed the assembly:—

'As the girl to whom I was married was too young to cohabit with me, she continued to remain for six or seven years in her father's house. At last, however, she attained the proper age, and I was duly apprised of the fact by her parents. My father-in-law's house was six or seven miles away from ours, and my mother, being unwell at the time we received this happy intelligence, was not in a fit state to undertake the journey. She therefore entrusted to me the duty of fetching my wife home. She counselled me so to conduct myself in word and deed that the girl's parents might not discover my natural stupidity. "Knowing as I do," said my mother as I took leave of her, "the shallowness of thy pate, I very much fear that thou wilt commit some foolish mistake or other." But I promised to conform to her instructions and to be on my best behaviour; and so departed.

'I was very well received by my father-in-law, who gave a grand feast to all the Brahmins of the village in honour of my visit. At length, the day appointed for our departure having arrived, my wife and I were permitted to start. On taking leave of us, my father-in-law poured out his blessings upon us both, but wept most bitterly, as if he had a presentiment of the misfortune that was about to befall his unfortunate daughter.

'It happened to be the hottest part of the year; and the heat, on the day of our departure, was something terrible. Moreover, we had to traverse a desert plain several miles across, and the sand, heated by the burning sun, soon began to scorch the feet of my young wife, who had been brought up in comfort in her father's house, and was not accustomed to such hardships. Unable to endure the fatigues of the journey, she burst into tears. I led her on by the hand, and tried my best to rally her spirits.

But it was in vain. She soon became so utterly tired that she could not move another step, and lay down on the ground, declaring that she was prepared to die on that very spot. My distress may easily be imagined. Seated by her side, I could not think what to do next, when suddenly I spied a merchant passing by, leading a number of bullocks laden with various kinds of goods. I accosted him at once, and, with tears in my eyes, told him the trouble I was in, and entreated him to help me with his good advice in my distressing position. The merchant approached my wife, and, looking at her attentively, informed me that, in consequence of the stifling heat then prevailing, the poor girl's life would be equally in danger, whether she remained where she was or proceeded farther on her journey. "Rather than that you should be subjected to the pain of seeing her perish before your very eyes, and perhaps also be exposed to the suspicion of having yourself killed her, I should advise you to give her up to me," he said. "I will put her on the back of one of my best bullocks, and will take her away with me, thus saving her from certain death. You will, it is true, lose her; but it is nevertheless far better that you should lose her with the satisfaction of having saved her life than that you should incur the suspicion of having killed her. As for her jewels, they cannot be worth more than twenty pagodas. See, here are twenty-five for them, and you shall give me your wife." The arguments of the man seemed to me quite unanswerable. I therefore took the money which he offered me, while he, lifting my wife in his arms, placed her on one of his bullocks, and made haste to continue his journey. I also continued mine, and reached home rather late, my feet all blistered by the hot sand over which I had to walk the whole way. "Where is thy wife?" my mother asked me, surprised to see me return alone. Thereupon I related to her all that had happened since I had left home, and finally told her of the sad accident that had happened to my youthful spouse, and how I had given her away to a passing merchant, rather than be a witness of her death, and be suspected moreover of having been the cause of it. At the same time I showed my mother the twenty-five pagodas that I had received from the merchant as compensation.

'Filled with rage at what I had told her, my mother was

utterly speechless for a while as if turned into stone. Then her suppressed feelings of indignation got the better of her, and she gave vent to the most violent imprecations and curses at my conduct. "Thou fool, thou wretch!" exclaimed she, "what hast thou done! Sold thy wife, hast thou? Delivered her up to another man! A Brahmin wife become the concubine of a low-caste merchant! What will people think of it? What will her relatives and ours say when they learn this disgraceful story? Is it possible to imagine a more egregious instance of folly and stupidity?" The sad occurrence which had happened to my wife soon reached the ears of her relatives, who hastened to my village, filled with rage and indignation, and fully resolved to beat me to death. And they certainly would have murdered both me and my innocent mother had we not been forewarned of their coming, and escaped from their furious vengeance by a speedy flight. Being themselves unable to avenge the wrong done, they laid the matter before the heads of the caste, who unanimously found me guilty, and sentenced me to pay a fine of two hundred pagodas as compensation for the injury done to the honour of my father-in-law. Moreover, a proclamation was issued by which everybody was forbidden, under pain of excommunication, ever to give any woman in marriage to such an idiot as myself. I was, therefore, condemned to remain a widower for the rest of my life. It was lucky for me, indeed, that I was not altogether outcasted, a favour which I owed to the great respect and esteem in which my father had been held.

'I must now leave you to judge if this instance of foolishness on my part is in any way inferior to those with which my rivals have been entertaining you, and if the honour of being the biggest fool is not justly due to me.'

The assembly, after mature deliberation, decided that all four suitors had given such absolute proofs of folly that each was justly entitled to claim superiority in his own way over the others; and that each was at liberty to call himself the greatest fool of all, and to attribute to himself the greeting of the soldier. 'Each of you has gained his suit,' remarked the president, 'so you may now continue your journey in peace, if that is possible.'

Delighted with so equitable a judgement, the travellers left

the court, each shouting louder than the other: 'I have gained my suit, I have gained my suit!'

The Story of Appaji, Prime Minister of King Krishna Roya[1].

Before the invasion of the Mussulmans, at a time when the Hindus enjoyed the happiness of being ruled by princes of their own nation, one of these princes, named Krishna Roya, was holding sway over one of the most fertile provinces of Southern India. This benevolent ruler was ever anxious to gain the love and respect of his subjects by doing everything in his power to make them happy; and, in order to attain this end more readily, he always took the most particular care to employ as his ministers and confidential advisers those persons only who by their wisdom, experience, and prudence were capable of affording him wise counsel. His prime minister, Appaji, enjoyed more of his confidence than any other, because he possessed the happy knack of letting his master know the truth about things by means of the most entertaining and striking allegories. One day, when this wise minister was alone with his sovereign, the latter, having nothing particular to do at the moment, asked him to solve the following problem. 'Appaji,' said he, 'I have often heard it said that in their religious and social usages men simply follow a beaten track, blindly and indiscriminately, however absurd such usages may be. Can you prove to me the truth of this assertion and the justice of that famous proverb: *Jatra marula, Jana marula*[2]?'

Appaji, with his usual modesty, promised the king to apply

[1] I have included this little story in the collection of Hindu fiction, because I found it in the same book from which I extracted the others. However, well-informed Hindus have told me that the story has been clothed in the form of fiction simply in order to make it more popular, and that it is really founded on historical fact. The memory of the good King Krishna Roya, and of his faithful minister Appaji, is still cherished by the people of India, who speak of him as a prince whose sole care was to render his people happy, in which good work he was most powerfully seconded by his minister. The period of his reign is said to date a short time before the Mahomedan invasion. However, whether this little story be fact or fiction, it is none the less a most excellent satire on the credulity of the Hindus.—DUBOIS.

[2] The meaning of this is: 'Is it the customs that are ridiculous, or is it the persons who follow them who are ridiculous?' The answer being: 'It is the people who follow them who are ridiculous.'—DUBOIS.

himself to the solution of the question and to give his answer in a few days. Returning home with his mind full of the problem, the minister sent in search of his shepherd who was taking care of his sheep. This man was a simple country boor with a rustic's ordinary intelligence. When the shepherd arrived, Appaji addressed him as follows:—'Hear me, Kuruba[1]; you must instantly lay aside your shepherd's garb and put on that of a *sannyasi* or penitent, whom you must represent for a few days. You will begin by rubbing your whole body with ashes; you will then take in one hand a bamboo staff with seven knots, and in the other the gourd in which a penitent always carries water, while under your arm you will carry the antelope's skin on which persons of that class must always sit. Thus equipped, you must go without delay to the mountain just outside the town and enter the cave which is to be found on its slope. You must lay your antelope's skin on the floor of the cave, and then squat down on it like a *sannyasi*, your eyes firmly fixed on the ground, your nostrils tightly shut with one hand, and the other hand resting on the top of your head. Be very careful to play your part properly, and take good care not to betray me. It is possible that the king, accompanied by his whole court and by a great crowd of other people, will come to visit you in the cavern; but whoever presents himself, even though it be I or the king himself, remain perfectly motionless in the posture which I have described to you, looking at nobody, speaking to nobody. And whatever happens, even though they should tear out the hairs one by one from your body, show not the smallest sign of pain, and do not budge an inch. These, Kuruba, are my commands. If by any chance you deviate in the least degree from the instructions which I have given you, you will answer for it with your life; but if on the contrary you follow them punctiliously, you may count upon a magnificent reward.'

The poor shepherd, accustomed all his life simply to look after his sheep, was very diffident as to his ability to change his condition for that of a *sannyasi*; but the tone of his master was so imperative that he judged it prudent to waive all objections and to obey him blindly. Furnishing himself with

[1] This is a name common enough among persons belonging to the caste of shepherds. Those who take care of cows or goats form another caste called *Golla*.—DUBOIS.

all the necessary paraphernalia of his new profession, and thinking over all that he had been ordered to do, he departed for the cave. Meanwhile Appaji returned to the palace, where he found the king surrounded by his courtiers. Approaching the monarch with a serious air, Appaji addressed him in the following terms:—'Great king, pardon me if at this moment, when surrounded by your wise councillors you are considering the best means of making your people happy—pardon me, I say, if I interrupt you in order to announce to you that the day has come when the gods, pleased with your eminent virtues, have decided to give you a marked token of their favour and of their protection. At the very moment that I am speaking a most wonderful thing is happening in your kingdom and not very far from your royal residence. On the slope of the mountain that lies near to your capital there is a cave in which a holy penitent, who has descended without doubt from the very abode of the great Vishnu, has deigned to take up his dwelling. In profound meditation on the perfections of Parabrahma he is wholly insensible to all terrestrial objects; he partakes of no other nourishment than the air which he breathes; not one of the objects that affect the five senses make the slightest impression on him. In a word, it may with truth be said of him that his body alone dwells in this world below, while his soul, his thoughts, and all his feelings are already closely united to the Divinity. I have no hesitation in saying that the miraculous appearance of this holy personage in your kingdom is a manifest guarantee of the interest which the gods take in you and yours.'

These words of Appaji were listened to with astonishment and wonder by the king and his courtiers. The king at once decided to go without delay to visit this illustrious penitent, whose praises the prime minister had sung so highly. And in order that the visit might be made with a dignity worthy of the eminent virtues of him who was the object of it, the king announced that he would go accompanied by his whole court and escorted by his whole army. Furthermore, he caused to be proclaimed to all his subjects, by public criers, by the beating of drums, and by the blowing of trumpets, his reasons for making the visit to the mountain; and everybody was invited to follow him. The procession was soon on its way.

Never before had such a magnificent gathering been witnessed; never had such a huge multitude of people assembled together. Pleasure was depicted upon every countenance. The air rang with cries of joy; while every one congratulated himself on having lived to enjoy the happiness of looking upon one of the greatest personages that had ever appeared on earth. On his arrival at the cave the king, filled with awe at the sight of so sacred a spot, entered it with all the marks of the most profound respect. It was not long before he descried the form of the illustrious penitent, crouching in the strange manner enjoined upon him by the minister, and apparently as motionless as the rocks which formed his retreat. After gazing upon him for some time in silence, the king tremblingly approached, and prostrating himself before him, with his hands joined, addressed him humbly as follows:—'Illustrious penitent! happy is the destiny which allowed me to live until this day, so that I might enjoy the inestimable happiness of looking upon your sacred face. I know not what it is that has procured for me such a wonderful blessing. The little that I have done during my life cannot possibly have rendered me worthy of such a distinction; probably, therefore, it is to the good works of my ancestors or to some good work which I may have accomplished in preceding births that I now owe my good luck. However this may be, the day on which I have seen your sacred feet is certainly the most glorious and happy of my life. In future I have nothing more to desire in this world, for in seeing these sacred feet of yours I have obtained the greatest blessing which could happen to any mortal. The sight of your feet alone is sufficient to wash away all the sins which I have committed both in this generation and in the preceding one. Henceforth I am as pure as the water of the Ganges, and all my desires are accomplished [1].'

The supposed penitent heard this flattering discourse without evincing the slightest sign that he had heard it, and without change either of countenance or posture. The crowd surrounding him, astonished at this indifference, became perfectly convinced that he was a supernatural being, for in no other way could they account for his solemn silence and complete

[1] This is the stereotyped form of address used in all Hindu books when describing the respects paid to a holy personage.—ED.

immovability. 'It is evident,' they said, 'that only the body of this holy penitent inhabits this lower world, while his soul and his thoughts must be united to the Divinity whose image he is.' The king, Krishna Roya, in the ecstasy of his religious zeal, and unable to attract a single glance from the holy penitent, addressed him in still more flattering terms in the hope of winning at any rate one look from him. Vain hope, however! The penitent made not the slightest movement of the head, nor relaxed for one moment the imperturbable gravity of his demeanour.

The prince was just about to leave the cave, when Appaji addressed him as follows:—'Great king, having come so far to visit this grand personage, who will henceforth become an object of public veneration, you must not depart without having received his blessing, or at any rate some gift which will bring you happiness for the rest of your days. Absorbed in meditation, and insensible to the material objects which surround him, this penitent cannot break his silence; nevertheless you should try to obtain something from him, be it only one of the hairs of his body.' The king took the advice of his minister, and, approaching the *sannyasi*, he tore out with extreme care one of the hairs of his chest, put it to his lips, kissed it devoutly, and then, showing it to the spectators, he cried: 'I will preserve this all my life. I will cause it to be enclosed in a golden locket, which shall always hang about my neck and be the most precious of all my ornaments, thoroughly convinced as I am that so noble a relic will prove to be a talisman against all the untoward accidents of life.'

The ministers and courtiers, in imitation of their master and wishing to participate in the same blessings, surrounded the poor penitent, and each one of them tore a hair from his chest, promising at the same time to preserve it as carefully as the king had done and to honour it as a holy relic. Moreover, the escort of the prince and the huge multitude which had accompanied him, learning what the king and his courtiers had done, were determined to follow so good an example; and in a very short time the supposed *sannyasi* found himself deprived of every hair he possessed, from his feet to his head; for the more devout amongst the multitude did not content themselves with a single one of his hairs, but pulled them out by the handful.

The poor Kuruba bore this horrible torture without the slightest complaint or the smallest change of posture, and without even raising his eyes.

On his return to his palace the king hastened to inform his women of the wonderful person whom he had visited, and showed them the relic of which he had become the possessor. The royal ladies, filled with wonder, one by one took the hair between their fingers, kissed it devoutly, pressed it to their eyes, and expressed an eager longing to see this illustrious personage. But as etiquette forbade persons of their sex and rank to show themselves in public, they supplicated the king to accord them the favour of having the *sannyasi* brought to the palace, so that they too might enjoy the happiness of looking upon him and plucking out his hairs with their own hands. The king at first refused to grant their request, but, yielding at length to their repeated solicitations, and wishing also to show as much honour to the penitent as lay in his power, he dispatched his whole court and army on foot and on horseback to escort the holy man to the palace. The messengers arrived at the cave while the multitude were still scrambling for the hairs of the *sannyasi*. The foremost and most distinguished amongst them at once approached the holy penitent. After explaining to him most humbly the object of their mission, they took him in their arms and placed him in a superb palanquin, where he remained in the same posture that he had so carefully maintained. Thereupon he was conducted with the greatest pomp and circumstance through the streets of the town, followed by a multitude of spectators who filled the air with shouts of joy. The poor Kuruba, who had eaten nothing for two days, and who was moreover feeling extremely sore from the rough treatment which he had received, was very far from enjoying all these honours. However, in the hope that the farce would soon come to an end and that he would get his reward, and also fearing to incur the wrath of his master, he managed to keep up his courage and to restrain himself from declaring who he was. 'What have I done,' he nevertheless murmured to himself, 'that I should be made to play a part which so little suits me and which exposes me to so much suffering? I would a thousand times rather be in the midst of my flock listening to the roars of the tigers in the

jungle than be deafened by the shouts and acclamations of this stupid crowd. If I were only with my sheep at the present time I should have had two meals already; but now for two days past I have had nothing to eat at all, and I am still quite in the dark as to when and how all this will end.'

The palace was reached while the supposed *sannyasi* was turning over all these things in his head. Carried into a superb apartment, he had not long to wait before he was visited by the princesses, who came one by one to prostrate themselves at his feet. Each of them, after gazing at him in wonder and silence for some time, was consumed with the desire of possessing one of his hairs as a relic to be kept in a locket of gold, and to be reckoned as the most precious of their jewels. But in vain they searched every visible part of his body. The crowd of devotees who had preceded them had not left a single hair to be seen. At length, after most careful search, they managed to discover here and there, in the wrinkles of his coarse skin, a few hairs which had escaped notice. With these they were perforce obliged to be content, and having religiously collected them they retired. Thereupon the king ordered that the penitent should be left alone during the night, in order that he might enjoy the repose of which he was so much in need, after the fatiguing and painful days which he had passed. Appaji, however, having slipped quietly into the apartment where the poor shepherd was languishing of hunger, fatigue, and anguish, addressed him in the following consoling manner:—'Kuruba, the time of thy trial is at an end. Thou hast played thy part most excellently, and I am very pleased with thee. I promised thee a reward. Rest assured that thou wilt get it. Meanwhile lay aside this costume of the penitent and put on thy shepherd's garments again. Go and refresh thyself by good food and peaceful slumber, and to-morrow morning thou shalt return to thy occupation.'

The poor fellow did not require to be told twice. He fled by a secret passage which his master pointed out to him, determined never to allow himself to be entrapped in the same way again.

The next morning the king, accompanied by his principal officials, returned to the apartment where the *sannyasi* had been left the night before, in order to offer him anew the

homage due to his holiness. But what was their surprise to find that he had disappeared! This circumstance, of course, only contributed to strengthen the faith of the public; and none doubted that this holy *sannyasi* was really a divine being who under human form had deigned to pay a passing visit to their monarch, and during the silence of the night had returned to the abode of happiness from which he had descended. The appearance of the holy personage, as well as his miraculous disappearance, formed for many days afterwards the sole topic of conversation at the court, in the town, and throughout the entire kingdom, until at length people grew tired of always repeating the same story, and nothing more was heard of it.

A short time after the event Appaji was one day at the court of the king his master, when the latter reminded him of the question which he had asked him to solve, viz. Is it the customs which are ridiculous, or only the men who follow those customs? Appaji was only waiting for his opportunity of answering; and having obtained an assurance from the king that nothing he said would offend his majesty, if his explanation were sincere and full, he addressed the king as follows:—'Great king, your own conduct solved the question in a manner quite irrefutable, at the time when you visited the cave in the mountain to see the penitent. You will no doubt be astonished to hear that this famous personage is none other than the shepherd who for many years has been looking after my sheep, a stupid and uncouth man who is only capable of inspiring you with the most sovereign contempt! Yet it is to this very personage that you and your whole court rendered divine honours; and that, moreover, on my sole testimony. The multitude followed blindly in your steps, and without trying to get to the bottom of the matter, or to gain any knowledge of the object of their devotion, they gave themselves up in an access of religious zeal to honour as a god an unknown and miserable shepherd who has hardly sufficient intelligence to distinguish him from brute beasts. Does not all this afford a most striking proof that men in their religious and civil usages only follow a beaten track? Thus you yourself have justified the truth of the ancient proverb which says: *Jatra marula, Jana marula*.'

Krishna Roya, far from being angry with the liberty which Appaji had taken with him in order to bring home to him the truth on a point of such importance, evinced, on the contrary, more affection and confidence than ever towards his minister, and continued to regard him as the most faithful and stanch of all his adherents.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Niti Slokas, or Moral Stanzas.

The *slokas*, or moral stanzas, of which I am about to give a translation, are familiar to all Hindus who are in any way educated. In most Hindu schools children are made to learn them by heart as a kind of catechism. They are written in Sanskrit verse, but as this classical language is not studied or understood by many people, each *sloka* is accompanied by a literal translation in the vulgar tongue. The Hindus take great delight in introducing these *slokas* into their ordinary conversations. I have tried in my translation to diverge as little as possible from the original text; but the difficulty of reproducing in a European language certain terms and expressions peculiar to the Indian languages has resulted in a few of these sentences being somewhat incoherent. This fault, of course, is not observable when they are read in the original. In translating them I have followed the order observed by the Indian author. The original collection contains a very large number of others, but I have restricted myself to reproducing the principal of them in order not to tire my readers.

I. He who feeds us is our father; he who helps us is our brother; he who places his confidence in us is our friend; those whose sentiments accord with ours are our kinsmen.

II. If a margosa seed be dropped into a beverage composed of sugar, honey, and ghee, the whole of it becomes so bitter, that although milk may rain upon it for a thousand years the mixture will lose nothing of its bitterness. This is symbolical of the wicked, who, however good people may be to them, never lose their natural tendency to do evil.

III. Beware of becoming attached to any country which is not your own, or of serving any master who is a foreigner;

renounce all relatives who are only so nominally; keep nothing which does not belong to you; and leave a *guru* who can do you no good.

IV. If you undertake to do anything which you find to be beyond your powers, give it up at once. If an individual dishonours a whole class, he should be excommunicated; if a single inhabitant causes ruin to a whole village, he should be expelled from it; if a village causes the ruin of a district, it should be destroyed; and if a district causes the ruin of the soul, it must be abandoned[1].

V. In the afflictions, misfortunes, and tribulations of life only he who actively helps us is our friend.

VI. Just as a plant of the forest becomes a friend of the body when by virtue of its medicinal properties it cures an illness which afflicts the body, however different the one may be from the other; similarly, he who renders us services should be considered our friend, however lowly may be his condition and however far he may be separated from us; whereas he who affects to be our friend should, if he attempts to hurt us, be regarded as our enemy.

VII. One may render good service to the wicked, yet whatever good one may do to them resembles characters written in water, which are effaced as soon as they are written; but services rendered to good people are like characters engraved on stone, which are never effaced.

VIII. One should keep oneself five yards distant from a carriage, ten yards from a horse, one hundred yards from an elephant; but the distance one should keep from a wicked man cannot be measured.

IX. If one ask which is the more dangerous venom, that of a wicked man or that of a serpent, the answer is, that however subtle the poison of a serpent may be, it can at any rate be counteracted by virtue of *mantrams*; but it is beyond all power to save a person from the venom of a wicked man.

[1] The first sentence appears to form part of another *sloka*. The correct rendering of this *sloka* is:—If an individual dishonours a family, he may be expelled from the family; if a family dishonours a village, it may be expelled from the village; if a village dishonours a district, it may be destroyed; if one's country is dangerous to one's personal safety, it may be abandoned.—ED.

X. To attempt to change the character of a wicked man by being kind to him is like trying to make a hog clean. It is no use to mix water with milk and offer the same to an eagle, for the eagle knows the secret of separating the milk from the water[1]. This is symbolical of the wicked.

XI. The venom of a scorpion is to be found in its tail, that of a fly in its head, that of a serpent in its fangs; but the venom of a wicked man is to be found in all parts of his body.

XII. A wise man preserves an equal mind both in adversity and in prosperity. He allows himself neither to be crushed by the former, nor elated by the latter.

XIII. An intelligent man is he who knows when to speak and when to be silent, whose friendship is natural and sincere, and who never undertakes anything beyond his powers.

XIV. Virtue is the best of friends, vice is the worst of enemies, disappointment is the most cruel of illnesses, courage is the support of all.

XV. Just as the crow is the Pariah among birds, and the ass the Pariah among quadrupeds, so is an angry *sannyasi* the Pariah among penitents; but the vilest of Pariahs is the man who despises his fellows.

XVI. Just as the moon is the light of the night and the sun the light of the day, so are good children the light of their family.

XVII. Flies look for ulcers, kings for war, wicked men for quarrels; but good men look only for peace.

XVIII. The virtuous man may be compared to a large leafy tree which, while it is itself exposed to the heat of the sun, gives coolness and comfort to others by covering them with its shade.

XIX. When we die the money and jewels which we have taken such trouble to amass during our life remain in the house. Our relatives and friends accompany us only to the funeral pyre where our bodies are burnt; but our virtues and our vices follow us beyond the grave.

XX. Temporal blessings pass like a dream, beauty fades like a flower, the longest life disappears like a flash. Our existence may be likened to the bubble that forms on the surface of water.

[1] In the Hindu proverb it is the swan which is credited with this power, and not the eagle, as Dubois states it.—ED.

XXI. Take heed not to trust yourself to the current of a river, to the claws or the horns of an animal, or to the promises of kings.

XXII. Take heed to place no trust in a false friend; only disappointment will be experienced from a wicked woman; nothing good can be hoped for from a person who is forced to act against his inclinations; nothing but misfortune can be looked for in a country where injustice prevails.

XXIII. A man of courage is recognizable in a moment of danger, a good wife when one is reduced to misery, firm friends in times of adversity, and faithful relatives at the time of a marriage.

XXIV. A hypocrite who disguises his true character and wishes to pass for an honest man is comparable to strong vinegar which one tries to make sweet by mixing with it camphor, musk, and sandal. The attempt may well be made, but the vinegar will never altogether lose its sourness.

XXV. To show friendship for a man in his presence and to libel him in his absence is to mix nectar with poison.

XXVI. A mirror is of no use to a blind man; in the same way knowledge is of no use to a man without discernment.

XXVII. Take care to spend nothing without hope of profit; to undertake nothing without reflection; to begin no quarrel without good cause. He who does not follow these golden rules courts his own ruin.

XXVIII. He who works with diligence will never feel hunger; he who devoutly meditates will never commit any great sin; he who is vigilant will never feel fear; and he who knows when to speak and when to be silent will never be drawn into a quarrel.

XXIX. Truth is our mother, justice our father, pity our wife, respect for others our friend, clemency our children. Surrounded by such relatives we have nothing to fear.

XXX. It is easier to snatch a pearl from the jaws of a crocodile or to twist an angry serpent round one's head like a garland of flowers without incurring danger, than to make an ignorant and obstinate person change his ideas.

XXXI. The miser acknowledges neither god nor *guru*, neither parents nor friends. He who suffers from hunger pays no heed whether the viands be well or ill seasoned. He who

loves and cultivates knowledge has no taste for idleness. The froward person has neither shame nor restraint.

XXXII. Temporal blessings are like foam upon the water; youth passes like a shadow; riches disappear like clouds before the wind. Therefore to virtue alone should we hold fast.

XXXIII. Let us realize well that death watches like a tiger to seize us unawares, sickness pursues us like a relentless enemy, earthly joys are like a leaky vessel from which water trickles ceaselessly until it is empty.

XXXIV. Before the existence of earth, water, air, wind, fire, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, sun, stars, and other objects, God One and Eternal was in existence.

XXXV. Pride and arrogance suit no one; constancy, humanity, sweetness, compassion, truth, love for one's neighbour, conjugal fidelity, goodness, amiability, cleanliness, are all qualities that distinguish really virtuous people. He who possesses all these ten qualities is a true *guru*.

XXXVI. Unhappy is the son whose father contracts debts; unhappy is the father whose son bears a bad character; unhappy is the wife whose husband is unfaithful.

XXXVII. To show friendship to a man while he is prosperous and to turn one's back upon him when he is in distress, is to imitate the conduct of prostitutes, who evince affection for their protectors only so long as they are opulent and abandon them as soon as they are ruined.

XXXVIII. There are six things which almost invariably entail unhappy consequences—the service of kings, robbery, horsebreaking, the accumulation of wealth, sorcery, and anger.

XXXIX. Never make known one's condition, one's wealth, one's mistress, one's *mantrams*, one's remedies, the place where one has hidden his money, the good works which one does, the insults which one has received, or the debts which one has contracted.

XL. Knowledge is the health of the body, poverty is its plague, gaiety is its support, sadness makes it grow old.

XLI. A shameless man fears the maladies engendered by luxury, a man of honour fears contempt, a rich person fears the rapacity of kings, gentleness fears violence, beauty fears old age, the penitent fears the influence of the senses, the body fears Yama, the god of death; but the miser and the envious fear nothing.

XLII. Just as milk nourishes the body and intemperance causes it to sicken, so does meditation nourish the spirit, while dissipation enervates it.

XLIII. It is prudent to live on good terms with one's cook, with ballad-mongers, with doctors, with magicians, with the ruler of one's country, with rich people, and with obstinate folk.

XLIV. Birds do not perch on trees where there is no fruit; wild beasts leave the forests when the leaves of the trees have fallen and there is no more shade for them; insects leave plants where there are no longer flowers; leeches leave springs which no longer flow; women leave men who have become old or poverty-stricken; a minister leaves the service of an obstinate king; servants leave a master who has been reduced to poverty. Thus it is that self-interest is the motive of everything in this world.

XLV. Only the sea knows the depth of the sea, only the firmament knows the expanse of the firmament; the gods alone know the power of the gods.

XLVI. However learned one may be, there is always something more to be learnt; however much in favour one may be with kings, there is always something to fear; however affectionate women may be, it is always necessary to be wary of them.

XLVII. The meaning of a dream, the effects of clouds in autumn, the heart of a woman, and the character of kings are beyond the comprehension of anybody.

XLVIII. It is more easy to discover flowers on the sacred fig-tree, or a white crow, or the imprint of fishes' feet, than to know what a woman has in her heart.

XLIX. The quality of gold is known by means of the touchstone; the strength of a bull is known by the weight that it will carry; the character of a man is known by his sayings; but there is no means by which we can know the thoughts of a woman.

L. Place no confidence in a parasite, or in a miser, or in any one who meddles in affairs which do not concern him. Do nothing to damage your friend. Avoid all communications with your friend's wife when he is away.

LI. A prudent man will never divulge his thoughts to another before he knows that other's thoughts.

LII. Nothing is more seductive and, at the same time, more deceitful than wealth. It is extremely troublesome to acquire, to keep, to spend, and to lose.

LIII. Courage is the most splendid quality in an elephant; high-spiritedness is the most splendid quality in a horse; the moon is the most beautiful ornament of the night; the sun is the most beautiful ornament of the day; cleanliness is the most beautiful ornament of the house; gentleness in words is the most beautiful ornament of speech; virtuous children are the most beautiful ornaments of families; so too is modesty the most beautiful ornament in a woman, and justice the most beautiful quality in kings.

LIV. Just as rain brings an end to famine, the bearing of children an end to a woman's beauty, an illicit transaction an end to the wealth of him who permits it; so does the degradation into which great people may fall bring an end to their greatness.

LV. When one sees blades of *sahrabi*[1] grass on white-ant heaps one can tell at once that snakes are there; so when one sees anybody frequenting the company of wicked men one may feel sure that he is as wicked as the others.

LVI. Great rivers, shady trees, medicinal plants, and virtuous people are not born for themselves, but for the good of mankind in general.

LVII. The joy of a Brahmin invited to a good feast, of a famished cow to which fresh grass is offered, or of a virtuous woman[2] who goes to a feast where she meets her long-absent husband is not greater than that of a good soldier who goes to the wars.

LVIII. Only death can cut short the affection of a faithful woman for her family, of a tiger and other wild animals for their claws, of a miser for his riches, of a warrior for his weapons.

LIX. Take care not to fix your abode in a place where there is no temple, no headman, no school, no river, no astrologer, and no doctor.

[1] Dubois evidently means *darbha* grass.—ED.

[2] If Hindu stories are to be believed, it was formerly a practice among Hindu women, who happened to become separated from their husbands by accident, to get up a feast on a very large scale, and to invite people of all sorts and conditions to it on the chance of coming across their long-lost husbands.—ED.

LX. We may descend into hell, establish our dwelling in the abode of Brahma or in the paradise of Indra, throw ourselves into the depths of the sea, ascend to the summit of the highest mountain, take up our habitation in the howling desert or in the town where Kubera reigns, take refuge with Yama, bury ourselves in the bowels of the earth, brave the dangers of battle, sojourn in the midst of venomous reptiles, or take up our abode in the moon; yet our destiny will none the less be accomplished. All that will happen to us will be such as it is not in our power to avoid[1].

LXI. Bad ministers cause the ruin of kings, evil opportunities that of young men, worldly communications that of penitents, good works done without discernment that of Brahmins.

LXII. The vice or virtue which prevails in a kingdom is attributed to the monarch; the faults of kings, to their ministers; the defects of women, to their husbands; those of children, to their parents; and those of disciples, to their *gurus*.

LXIII. Just as intoxicating liquors destroy our sense of taste, so does a son of bad character destroy a whole family. The society of wicked men dishonours those whose company they frequent. Self-interest destroys friendships that are most firmly cemented.

LXIV. He who boasts of knowing that which he does not know and he who affects not to know that which he does know are equally blameworthy.

LXV. There are three kinds of persons who are well received everywhere—a gallant warrior, a learned man, and a pretty woman.

LXVI. The favours of a prostitute appear like nectar at first, but they soon become poison. The pursuit of knowledge is troublesome at first, but knowledge is a source of great delight when it is acquired.

LXVII. A virtuous man ought to be like the sandal-tree, which perfumes the axe that destroys it.

[1] In order to understand clearly the sense of this stanza, one must remember that Hindus admit the doctrine of absolute predestination, and assert that the destiny of each man is irrevocably written on his forehead by the hand of Brahma himself.—DUBOIS.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Funeral Ceremonies of Brahmins.

The closing moments of a Brahmin's life are associated with a number of ridiculous ceremonies. One might suppose therefrom that Brahmins were eager to preserve after their death that superiority over their fellows which they boast about so much during their lifetime; and that their desire was to surpass everybody else in the foolishness of their practices at the period when the scythe of Father Time reduced *these gods of the earth* to the level of the humblest Pariah. For the rest, most Hindus observe very many formalities when their near relatives die. As soon as the symptoms of death become manifest in a Brahmin, a spot is chosen on the ground and smeared over with cow-dung. On this *darbha* grass is strewn, and over this again is placed a new and ceremonially pure cloth, upon which the dying man is then laid. His loins are next girded with another ceremonially pure cloth. Then, the dying man having given his permission, the ceremony called *sarva prayaschitta*, or perfect expiation, is performed by the *purohita* and the chief mourner—that is to say, the person who is most nearly related to the deceased or who by common usage has the right to perform this function. Then a few small coins of gold, silver, and copper are carried in on a metal salver, and in another *akshatas*, sandalwood, and *pancha-gavia*. The *purohita* pours a few drops of the *pancha-gavia* [1] into the mouth of the dying man, by virtue of which his body becomes perfectly purified. Then the general purification ceremonies are proceeded with. The *purohita* and the chief mourner invite the sick Brahmin to

[1] See Part I, Chapter XIII.

recite in spirit, if he cannot articulate distinctly, certain *mantrams*, by virtue of which he is delivered from all his sins. After this a cow is brought in along with her calf; her horns are ornamented with rings of gold or brass, her neck with garlands of flowers, while her body is covered with a new piece of cloth; and she is also decorated with various other ornaments. The cow is led up to the sick person, who takes her by the tail, and at the same time the *purohita* recites a *mantram* praying that the cow may lead the dying Brahmin by a happy road into the other world. The latter then makes a present of the animal to some other Brahmin, into whose hand he pours a few drops of water in token of the gift. This gift of a cow is called *godana*, and is indispensable if one wishes to arrive without mishap in Yama-loka, or the kingdom of Yama, the king of hell. Bordering Yama-loka there is a river of fire which all men must cross after they have ceased to live. Those who have made the *godana*, when they come to their last hour, will find on the banks of this river a cow which will help them to pass on to the opposite bank without being touched by the flame. After the *godana*, the coins placed on the metal salver are distributed to the Brahmins, and the sum total ought to equal the price of the cow. Afterwards the *dasa-dana*, or the ten gifts, are prepared. These are to be distributed at the obsequies which will subsequently take place. The gifts consist of cows, lands, gingelly seeds, gold, liquefied butter, cloth, various kinds of grains, sugar, silver, and salt. These ten articles, which are offered to the Brahmins, are supposed to be extremely acceptable to the gods, and procure for him who offers them a blessed sojourn in the Abode of Bliss after death.

A Brahmin must not be allowed to die on a bed or even on a mat, and for this reason: the soul in separating itself from the body in which it is incorporated enters into another body, which leads it to the Abode of Bliss destined for it, and if the dying Brahmin were to expire on a bed, he would be obliged to carry it with him wherever he went, which, it may easily be supposed, would be very inconvenient. Accordingly, it is necessary, in order to relieve the dying person of such a burden, to offer abundant alms and perform expensive ceremonies. This absurd custom has suggested a curse which is very common amongst the Brahmins when they quarrel with each other.

'Mayst thou,' they will say, 'have no person near thee to place thee on the ground in the hour of death!'

As soon as the dying person has breathed his last, it is a recognized custom that everybody present must at once burst into tears; and that in a fashion strictly laid down for the occasion. The chief mourner then proceeds to bathe without taking off his clothes, next has his head and face shaved, and lastly goes to bathe a second time in order to purify himself from the defilement of the barber's touch. On his return he causes to be brought to him *pancha-gavia*, gingelly oil, *darbha* grass, raw rice, and a few other things. He places on the ring finger of the right hand the *pavitram*[1]. Then he performs the *sam-kalpa*, and offers *homam* (sacrifice to fire) in order that the deceased may obtain a place in heaven.

Then the corpse is washed, and the barber shaves off all the hair. It is washed a second time, and after that sandalwood and *akshatas* are placed upon the forehead and garlands of flowers round the neck. The mouth is filled with betel-leaves and the body is apparelled in rich raiment and jewels. It is then placed on a kind of state bed, where it remains exposed to view during the time that the preparations for the obsequies are proceeding. When these have been finished, the person who is presiding at the ceremony brings a new piece of ceremonially pure cloth in which he wraps the corpse. A strip of this cloth is torn off, and a small piece of iron, on which a few drops of gingelly oil are poured, is tied up in it. This cloth is twisted into the form of a triple cord, and must be kept for twelve days, to be used in the various ceremonies of which I shall speak later on.

The litter on which the body is placed is constructed as follows. To two long parallel poles are fastened transversely seven pieces of wood with ropes of straw, and on this the body is placed. Then they bind the toes and the two thumbs together[2]. The shroud, which until then has been merely thrown over the body, is now wrapped around it, and is bound strongly with straw ropes. If the dead Brahmin happens to leave a wife behind, his face is left uncovered. The chief mourner then gives the signal to depart, and, carrying fire in

[1] See Part I, Chapter XIII.

[2] As soon as a person breathes his last his toes and thumbs are tied with a small piece of cloth.—ED.

an earthen vessel, puts himself at the head of the procession. After him comes the funeral litter, ornamented with flowers, green leaves, coloured cloths, and sometimes costly stuffs. Surrounding it are the parents and friends of the deceased, all of them without turbans, and having simply a piece of cloth thrown over their heads in token of mourning. The women are never allowed to attend the funeral ceremonies out of doors[1]. They remain in the house and utter most lamentable cries. On the way to the funeral pyre three halts are made. Each time the mouth of the dead person is opened, and a little raw and soaked rice is placed in it, so that hunger and thirst may at the same time be satisfied. These halts, however, have a more serious motive. Instances have been known, it is said, of persons believed to be dead having not been so in reality, or if really dead having come to life again[2]. Seeing that the spirits of the nether world or their emissaries have been known to make mistakes in their choice and to take one person for another, these halts are made to give plenty of time for the spirits to recognize any mistakes they may have made, so that no person may be thrown on the funeral pyre who is still destined to live. Each of these halts lasts about a quarter of an hour. On arrival at the burning-ground a shallow pit is first dug, about six feet in length and three in breadth. This is then consecrated by *mantrams* and sprinkled with ceremonial water, while several small pieces of money are thrown into it.

Then the funeral pyre is erected, and the corpse is placed upon it. The chief mourner next takes a small ball of dry cow-dung, sets fire to it, places it upon the hollow of the deceased's stomach, and performs on this lighted bratty the sacrifice of *homam*. Then follows a most extraordinary ceremony, which at the same time is certainly a very disgusting one, the chief mourner placing his lips successively to all the apertures of the

[1] This is not true of the Brahmins, whose women always follow the procession to the cremation ground.—ED.

[2] These halts are made to allow time for recovery, if the man is not dead, before reaching the cremation ground. For it is a firm belief that if by any chance the supposed corpse should revive after reaching the pyre, dire consequences would result to the village. He is not, under those circumstances, allowed to go back to the village, but is expelled altogether.—ED.

deceased's body, addressing to each a *mantram* appropriate to it, kissing it, and dropping on it a little ghee. By this ceremony the body is supposed to be completely purified. The chief mourner then places a small piece of gold money in the mouth, and everybody present in turn deposits in it a few grains of soaked rice. The near relatives then approach and deprive the corpse of all the jewels with which it is adorned, and even of its shroud; and then it is covered with small splinters of wood which are sprinkled with *pancha-gavia*. The chief mourner walks round the funeral pyre three times, and pours upon it some water that is allowed to trickle from an earthen vessel which he carries on his shoulder, and which he afterwards breaks on the head of the deceased.

This last act and that which follows formally constitute him the dead man's heir[1]. Then a lighted torch is brought to him. Before he takes it, however, it is customary for him to show his grief by uttering mournful cries. In displaying his grief he rolls upon the ground, strikes his breast fiercely with his hand, and makes the air resound with his cries. Following his example, all present also weep bitterly, or pretend to do so, holding themselves clasped one to another as a sign of grief. Then, taking hold of the torch, the chief mourner sets fire to the four corners of the pile. As soon as the flames have caught hold of it everybody retires, with the exception of the four Brahmins who have carried the corpse, and who must remain on the spot until the whole pyre has been consumed. Meanwhile the heir goes to bathe himself without taking off his

[1] 'The offering to deceased fathers at the *sraddha* is the key to the Hindu law of inheritance. It furnishes the principal evidence of kinship, on which the title to participate in the patrimony is founded, no power of making wills being recognized in Manu, or any other authoritative code of Hindu Jurisprudence. . . . The object of such *sraddhas* is two-fold, viz. first, the re-embodying of the soul of the deceased in some kind of form after cremation of the corpse, or simply the release of the subtile body which is to convey the soul away. Secondly, the raising him from the regions of the atmosphere, where he would have otherwise to roam for an indefinite period among demons and evil spirits to a particular heaven or region of bliss. There he is eventually half deified among the shades of departed kinsmen. Manu, however, is not clear as to the precise effect of the *sraddha*. He merely states that its performance by a son or the nearest male kinsman is necessary to deliver a father from a kind of hell called *Put*, and that the spirits of the departed (*Pitris*) feed on the offered food.'—MONIER-WILLIAMS.

clothes; while soaked in this way, he selects a clear spot on the ground and causes rice and pulse to be cooked there in a new earthenware vessel, which he must keep carefully for the ten days following. Then directing his thoughts to the deceased, he pours a libation of oil and water on the ground, strews *darbha* grass over it, which he also sprinkles with the same mixture of oil and water, and on this again he places the rice and pulse after moulding them in the form of balls. A third libation is then offered, *mantrams* are recited, and the balls are thrown to the crows, which, as every one knows, are very common in India. The Hindus believe these noisy and rapacious birds to be evil spirits, in fact, devils under the form of crows. This offering, therefore, is intended to render them kindly disposed towards the dead man. If they refuse to accept the food, which we are told sometimes happens, it is a very bad omen for him, and instead of being admitted into the Abode of Bliss he will find himself, despite all the *mantrams* and purifying ceremonies, made captive in the Yama-loka, that is to say, in hell.

After the corpse has been consumed, the four Brahmins who remained near the pyre return to the place where the other people present at the ceremonies have gathered together[1]. Three times they walk round the assembly, asking permission to take the *bath of the Ganges*. Then they proceed to perform their ablutions in order to purify themselves of the pollution of having carried a corpse. The chief mourner invites all present to take the *bath of the dead*, the *mritika-snana*, which is supposed to be on behalf of the deceased whose body has just been consumed by the flames. This bath, it is supposed, will refresh it after the fiery ordeal. Then a few small coins and some betel-leaves are distributed among those present, and every one who has a right to them is presented with the *dasa-dana*, after which all return to the door of the deceased's house, though no person enters the house because it is still defiled. Finally, everybody washes his feet and returns to his own house.

Nevertheless, for the heir another ceremony still remains, which consists in filling a little chatty with earth and sowing nine kinds of grain, namely rice, barley, gingelly seeds, and the five kinds of pulse. He waters them so that they may quickly sprout and be used for certain ceremonies which follow.

[1] These people always meet on the bank of a river or a tank.—ED.

A thing of the very highest importance that he must do that day is to place in the habitation of the deceased a small vessel full of water, over which he hangs a thread tied at one end to the ceiling[1]. This thread is intended to serve as a ladder to the *prana*, that is to say, to the life-breath which animated the body of the deceased, and which by this thread is enabled to descend and drink the water during the ten days which follow. And in order that the *prana* may have something to eat as well as to drink, a handful of rice is placed each morning by the side of the vessel.

It is not until all these ceremonies and formalities have been accomplished that the people of the house are allowed to take any food. For they have neither eaten nor drunk anything since the moment that the deceased gave up the ghost. All these practices and those which I will briefly detail in the following chapter are most rigorously observed. The omission of the most minute of them would cause no less scandal than the omission of the more important. Nevertheless poverty is allowed as an excuse for neglecting those which entail large expenditure. For instance, most Brahmins would be quite unable to make the *dasa-dana*, or ten gifts.

It is to be observed that these practices, however superstitious they may appear, clearly denote that the Hindus have preserved a most distinct idea of the immortality of the soul; that they recognize the corruption of human nature and the necessity of resorting to means of purification for enabling the soul to enter the blessed state and enjoy the rights which it has forfeited through sin. And the *prana*, for instance, which is regarded by the Hindus sometimes as the soul and sometimes as the breath of life, reminds us of the *spiraculum vitae* of the Holy Scriptures, by the aid of which the Creator gave life to the clay out of which He formed mankind.

[1] This is not done in some parts of South India.—Ed.

CHAPTER XXX

The Various Ceremonies observed after Burial in honour of the Dead.

Hindu mourning lasts one year, during which a large number of ceremonies have to be observed. The principal are as follow:—

On the day after the funeral the chief mourner, accompanied by his relatives and friends, goes to the place consecrated to the burning of the dead. There he recommences the ceremonies of the previous evening, without forgetting the food for the crows, and places on the ground the strip of cloth which has been torn from the pall. The Brahmins present take *the bath of the dead* (*mritika-snana*), receive betel, and depart. The heir, however, keeps back one of them, and gives him two measures of rice, peas, and vegetables, wrapped in a new cloth, which he presents as well, so that he may make a good meal and be well clothed by proxy as it were for the deceased, in case the rice, the peas, the oil, and the water which have already been offered for the latter may not be sufficient to allay his hunger and quench his thirst, and so that he may not be without clothes to cover his nakedness in the next world.

On the third day, the heir again summons his relatives and friends. He erects a small *pandal* in a corner of his courtyard, and has rice, seven sorts of vegetables, cakes, &c., cooked there. When these viands have been prepared, he places them on a cloth folded in four, and covers them all with another cloth. Then five small earthen pots are brought filled with *pancha-gavia*, as also a measure of rice, some peas, vegetables, sandalwood, *akshatas*, three small pieces of cloth dyed yellow,

some flour, a small stick two cubits in length, some betel, some gingelly oil, and the ten gifts (*dasa-dana*). Provided with all these and accompanied by his relatives, he returns to the burning-ground. There he performs his ablutions, puts on the ring *pavitram*, performs the *sam-kalpa*, and then fills a new earthen pot with water, which he sprinkles over the ashes of the deceased. After that he sprinkles them with milk. He squats on his heels with his face turned to the east, performs once more the *sam-kalpa*, stirs the ashes with the small stick above mentioned, looking for any bones that may have escaped the flames, and these he puts into an earthen pot, reciting a *mantram* meanwhile. Gathering up a portion of the ashes, he throws them into the water. The remainder he collects into a heap, to which he gives the rough semblance of a human figure, supposed to represent the deceased. He offers as sacrifice to it a portion of the things he has brought, sprinkles it with *pancha-gavia*, and puts the whole into an earthen pot. These sad mementoes of the deceased are destined to be thrown subsequently into one of the sacred rivers.

He then raises a mound of earth twelve inches high on the exact spot where the dead body has been burnt, and taking three small stones he places one in the middle of the mound, which receives the name of the deceased; the second, which he places at the south end, is named Yama; and the third, which he places at the north end, is called Rudra. Calling these three stones by the names which he has given them, he proceeds to rub them over with gingelly oil, bathes them while he continues to recite *mantrams*, and clothes them in the three pieces of yellow cloth with which he has provided himself. Afterwards, putting them back in their places, he offers them *puja* and *neiveddya*, and pours a libation of oil and water in honour of each particular one. Then all the Brahmins present file in one by one, embrace the chief mourner, and weep with him. The distribution of *dasa-dana* follows as on the first day.

The three stones are next placed in the earthen pot that is intended for cooking the rice and the peas, which are mixed with a fresh supply of these vegetables, and the heir carries it all to the border of the tank. After cooking the viands he offers them to the three stones, repeats his libations, and at last throws the rice and the peas to the crows. A meal and a cloth

are again bestowed on a Brahmin by proxy as it were for the deceased; and the day ends in pretty much the same manner as those preceding it.

It is considered of great importance to preserve carefully for ten days the three little stones, as well as the pot used for the cooking of the crows' food. If by misfortune a single one of these articles were lost, all the ceremonies would have to be begun over again.

From the fourth to the ninth day inclusive, these foolish ceremonies are repeated daily. The objects are (1) to prevent the deceased suffering from hunger, thirst, and nakedness; (2) to enable him to divest himself as quickly as possible of his hideous and ghastly carcase and to assume a beautiful form, so that, in a new birth, he may be neither deaf, nor blind, nor dumb, nor lame, nor afflicted with any bodily infirmity.

On the tenth day the chief mourner rises early to make his ablutions, constructs a little *pandal* in his courtyard, causes rice, peas, and three sorts of vegetables to be cooked there, prepares the drink called *paramanna*, and some rice cakes cooked in water. He places the whole on a large plantain leaf, with three pieces of saffron on the top. In short, he prepares all the articles indispensable for the sacrifices and offerings which he is about to make.

When all is ready, the widow of the deceased, after performing her ablutions, paints her eyelids with antimony, her forehead with vermilion, her neck with sandalwood-paste, her arms and legs with saffron; she then puts on her richest garments, bedecks herself with all her jewels, twines red flowers in her hair, and hangs garlands of sweet-smelling flowers round her neck. The married women surround her, clasp her by turns in their arms, and weep with her.

The chief mourner, provided with all his sacrificial paraphernalia, and followed by his relatives and friends, as well as by the widow and her companions, returns once more to the burning-ground, where all the preparatory ceremonies are renewed just as those already described. This time he mixes some earth with water, and spreads three coats of the mud on the three stones, accompanied by *mantrams*, adjurations, sacrifices, offerings, &c.

The women present then surround the widow once more,

beating their heads and breasts in measured time and weeping and sobbing as loud as they can.

The chief mourner makes three little balls of boiled rice and peas, places them on the ground on *darbha* grass, pours a libation of oil and water, offers the little balls to the deceased, and then throws them to the crows.

He puts back the three stones into the earthen pot which has played so important a part during these ten days, carries them to the edge of the tank, performs *sam-kalpa*, puts the ring *pavitram* on his finger, walks into the water up to his neck, turns to the east, and looking towards the sun, says:—

'Till now, these stones have represented the dead body; may that dead body from this moment leave its hideous form and take that of the gods! May it be transported into *Swarga* to enjoy all its pleasures as long as the Ganges shall flow, as long as these stones shall last!'

At these words he throws the pot and the stones inside it over his head into the water. Then he performs his ablutions, returns to the bank, performs the *sam-kalpa*, and distributes the *dasa-dana*. Then, with the permission of the Brahmins, he and his near relatives are shaved; for during these ten days of mourning shaving is not allowed. Finally, after numberless foolish ceremonies, of which I have given only a short epitome, all repair to the edge of the tank. There a heap of earth four fingers high is made, on which is placed a little ball also of earth, which receives the name of the deceased. Then the widow, surrounded by her companions and showing no sign of grief, divests herself of her jewels and rich garments, wipes off the artificial pigments with which she had smeared different parts of her body, and finally takes off the *tali* which she wears round her neck. This discarded ornament she places near the ball of earth which represents her deceased husband, uttering these words the while: 'I abandon all these to prove to thee my love and my devotion.' Then ensue fresh wailings and weepings on the part of her companions.

The *purohita* appears on the scene at this moment to perform the *puniaha-vachana*, that is, the consecration of holy water[1]. He makes all the women who are participating in the mourning drink a little of this water, and sprinkles some drops on their

[1] See Part I, Chapter XIII.

heads. By this means they obtain purification from the defilement which they have contracted by taking part in the funeral ceremonies.

The heir gives to each person present an areca-nut and a betel-leaf, and to the widow a white cloth, which she immediately puts on.

Finally, all return to the house of the deceased, where, after having inspected the lamp, which ought to have been kept burning all this time on the spot where the deceased breathed his last, each one takes leave and does not enter his own house till he has washed his feet at the door.

Being now left alone, the heir takes the five little earthen pots in which he had sown some seeds on the first day, offers them *puja*, and then throws them into the water.

On the eleventh day, as soon as his ablutions are over, he goes to summon nineteen Brahmins, to whom he first of all offers a feast to be eaten by proxy for the deceased. Then he puts into a basket a large earthen chatty containing two measures of rice, and into another basket several more earthen pots of a smaller size. He provides himself with liquefied butter, gingelly oil, *darbha* grass, flowers, &c., and, accompanied by the Brahmins invited, goes to the edge of the tank. There he digs a small hole, blesses it with *mantrams*, places therein his little earthen pots, and lights a fire. At the four corners of the hole he places *darbha* grass and sprinkles oil all round it. He spreads some boiled rice on a plantain leaf, sprinkles it with ghee, and makes it into thirty-six little balls, which he throws subsequently into the fire one after the other. To this fire he makes profound obeisance, beseeching it to grant the deceased access into the Abode of Bliss. He then distributes *dasa-dana* and gives the Brahmins some betel. The latter then go to bathe themselves, and return to assist in the ceremony of *the deliverance of the bull*.

For this purpose a bull three years old is chosen. It must be all of one colour, either white, red, or black. After washing it they smear it with sandalwood-paste and *akshatas*, decorate it with garlands of flowers, and with a red-hot iron brand on the right haunch the figure of one of Siva's weapons called *sulah*. The chief mourner implores this god to consent to the *deliverance of the bull*, so that, as a reward for this good deed, the

deceased may find a place in an Abode of Bliss. They then set loose the bull, which is allowed to wander about grazing without a keeper wherever it likes, and it is given as a present to some Brahmin[1].

The nineteen Brahmin guests seat themselves in a line on small stools. The heir spreads *darbha* grass before them, and gives a blade of it to each, while reciting a *mantram* and uttering the name of the deceased. He then sprinkles some drops of oil on their heads, presents them with sandalwood-paste, gives to each a present of two pieces of cloth, offers a libation of oil and water, and again serves them with food.

The repast over, he mixes some boiled rice, peas, and herbs together, rolling them all into three balls, which he puts into an earthen pot. After sundry libations, offerings, and other formalities, he throws these three balls to the cattle and dismisses the nineteen Brahmins, who, before returning home, take good care to bathe.

On the twelfth day the heir goes to summon eight Brahmins, and makes them sit down on as many stools in front of him. He chooses one of them to represent the corpse of the dead man, and gives him, as well as the seven others, a blade of *darbha* grass with the usual ceremony. He then traces three squares on the ground, over which he spreads cow-dung, which he blesses with *mantrams*, and over this again he pours oil and spreads *darbha* grass. In the middle square he places the Brahmin whom he has appointed to represent the corpse, sprinkles over his feet oil and *darbha* grass, and then washes them with water.

Two other Brahmins step into the second square, and the five others into the third. To each of them he performs the same office. Having made them sit down, he approaches the one who represents the corpse, sprinkles on his head and hands some drops of oil, while repeating a *mantram*, puts earrings in his ears and a gold ring on his finger, makes him a present of two pieces of cloth, a white blanket, a brass *chembu* (drinking bowl), and some betel, hangs round his neck one of the rosaries called *rudrakshas*, and smears him with sandalwood-paste. Each of the seven others also receives two pieces of cloth, a white

[1] These bulls are usually dedicated to a temple, and they are used for breeding purposes.—ED.

blanket, and a *chembu*. Then they all take part in the repast prepared for them. At its conclusion the heir puts some rice and oil in a dish, and moulds four balls, which he places on the ground after performing the necessary formalities. One of these balls is intended for the deceased, a second for the deceased's father, a third for his grandfather, and the last for his great-grandfather. Taking the deceased's ball, he says:—

'Till now thou hast preserved the hideous appearance of a corpse: from this moment thou shalt clothe thyself in the divine form of thy ancestors; thou shalt inhabit with them the *pitri-loka* (abode of the ancestors) and there enjoy every sort of happiness.'

He then divides this ball into three portions and mixes one portion with each of the remaining three balls.

In the same way he tears the little strip of cloth which represents the triple cord of the deceased into three pieces and puts one on each ball. To all of these he makes offerings and libations. After this, comes a further distribution of *dasa-dana*. Finally, the balls and offerings are thrown to the cattle.

When all this long and monotonous ceremony is ended, the chief mourner anoints his head with oil, takes a bath, and returns home well covered up in a cloth. He embraces his relatives and friends, addressing words of consolation to each in turn. He paints his forehead with sandalwood-paste and *akshatas*, resumes his turban and ordinary clothes, and distributes presents according to his means.

The *purohita* also recites a great many *mantrams*, and sprinkles all the corners of the house with holy water, by which means it is purified, together with all those who inhabit it[1].

On the thirteenth day the heir performs *homam* in the accustomed manner in honour of the nine planets.

A ceremony something like that of the twelfth day takes place on the twenty-seventh; but only three Brahmins take part in this, representing respectively the deceased, his father, and his grandfather. One is supposed to call himself Vasudeva,

[1] The same kind of ceremony took place amongst the Romans on the tenth day, named *denicales feriae*. As may have been observed, this is not the only feature of resemblance between the funeral ceremonies of the Romans and those of the Hindus.—DUBOIS.

the second calls himself Yama, and the third calls himself the Sun. The heir makes the usual offerings and libations to these personages, gives each of them a piece of cloth, and has a meal served up to them, at the end of which he kneads three balls composed of rice, peas, and herbs, which are solemnly offered to the deceased and his two ancestors.

The same ceremony is repeated on the 30th, 45th, 60th, 75th, 90th, 120th, 175th, 190th, 210th, 240th, 270th, 300th, and 330th day after the death of the deceased. Further, the anniversaries of the deaths of his father and mother must be celebrated by a Hindu all his life long without fail; and each time most of the formalities just mentioned must be observed and liberal gifts made to Brahmins.

At each new moon it is the indispensable duty of a man to offer a libation of oil and water to his deceased father, as well as to his grandfather and to his great-grandfather[1].

I have mentioned that the pecuniary circumstances of many Brahmins do not allow of their fulfilling to the letter the costly obligations imposed upon a chief mourner. But there are a great many which are obligatory and which entail considerable expense. Conceit and vanity, which are such strong incentives in the minds of Brahmins, induce many of them to contract debts infinitely beyond their means in order to make a show on such occasions.

The funeral ceremony for a woman is nearly the same as that for a man. Rather less attention, however, is paid to a widowed mother of a family. And much less still to a widow who dies without children; the flames of the funeral pile have scarcely consumed the mortal remains of such a one before she is forgotten. When a Brahmin woman dies, the married women, kinswomen, or friends of the family assist at her funeral ceremony, and it is they who receive the usual presents and distributions.

The obsequies of the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas are performed with nearly the same pomp as those of the Brahmins, the ceremonies which are observed lasting twelve days.

It is always a *purohita* who presides at the death-bed, and who

[1] And also to their wives. Libations are also sometimes offered to the maternal grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather and their wives.—ED.

directs the mourning ceremonies in both these castes. The chief mourner invites the Brahmins, to whom offerings and presents are made. These ceremonies are repeated every month during the first year; and after that it suffices if the *titi,* that is the anniversary, is celebrated regularly.

The last services which the Sudras render to their dead are accompanied by much less ceremony and formality. They have neither *mantrams* nor sacrifices. However, when a Sudra's last hour is come, it is customary to call a Brahmin to go through the ceremony of *prayaschitta* (expiation) for him. His family is also permitted to bestow on the Brahmins *godana* and *dasa-dana,* as well as the other customary gifts and presents. As soon as a Sudra dies, they wash his body and have him shaved by the barber. Then they pay attention to his toilet, which they strive to render as elegant as possible, and afterwards place him sitting cross-legged on a sort of bed of state. When all is ready for the obsequies, they remove him, still in the same position, to an open litter, or shrine, ornamented with flowers, green leaves, and valuable cloths, or else to an open palanquin splendidly decorated. The body is then carried to the funeral pyre by twelve bearers.

Musical instruments are employed in the funeral processions of the Sudras, but never in those of the higher castes. The two principal instruments are the long trumpet, called in Tamil *tarai,* and the *sankha,* or *sangu,* another no less lugubrious instrument made out of a large sea-shell (the conch). As soon as a Sudra has breathed his last, two of these *tarais* are blown to announce the sad news to all the neighbours. Their harsh and piercing sounds are audible at a great distance, and cannot fail to inspire a pious horror wherever they are heard. One trumpet will sound a B flat, droning on this note for the space of half a minute; then another trumpet answers in G sharp; and thus they respond by turns. This monotonous and ear-splitting noise continues without interruption from the moment of death until the end of the obsequies.

Mourning in the Sudra caste lasts only three days. The third day is called the *day of milk offering.* To perform this ceremony the chief mourner provides himself with three young cocoanuts, four cocoanut branches, a measure of raw rice, some boiled rice, herbs, fruits, &c. He fills an earthen pot with milk, places it in

a new basket, and accompanied by the relatives and friends of the family, preceded by conch-players, goes to the place where the body of the deceased was burnt. On his arrival he draws some water in an earthen pot and sprinkles it over the ashes on the pyre. Above this he erects a small *pandal*, covered with palm leaves and supported by four pillars, the interior of which he drapes with a piece of cloth. He collects the bones which have escaped the flames, puts the largest one on a flat cake made of dried cow-dung, and gathers up the rest in a heap. He calls the deceased by name and pours milk over the bones. During this libation the conch-players make the air resound with their lugubrious noise.

The chief mourner then piles up the ashes over the bones. At the side he places half a cocoanut, and on the top pieces of another cocoanut which he breaks, sprinkling the milk over this pyramid of ashes. He places a third cocoanut close by on a plantain leaf and invokes Harischandra[1].

Finally, he kneads the rice and other eatables which he has brought with him into a round mass and throws the whole to the crows, calling meanwhile upon the name of the deceased.

Then the relatives and friends come in turn to embrace the chief mourner, holding him in their arms and weeping with him. He takes the large bone which was placed in reserve; and all the mourners, to the doleful notes of the conches, go and throw this bone into the neighbouring tank. After bathing, all accompany the chief mourner to his house. There with much ceremony they put a new turban on his head, and each hastens to do justice to the repast prepared for the occasion. Thus ends the funeral ceremony.

Wealthy Sudras do not stop here. They proceed on the thirtieth day to a new ceremony, on which occasion they strive to rival the Brahmins in magnificence. And the Brahmins, since they enjoy all the honour and profit of the feast, take care not to show any jealousy.

The funeral ceremonies of the Sudras vary much in different districts. In some places Hindus of this caste bury their dead instead of burning them. In other places they throw the body into the river, deliberately feigning the river to be the Ganges. This kind of burial, the most expeditious and least costly of any,

[1] One of the kings of Ayodhya, who was famous for speaking the truth.—ED.

is common enough among the sects of Siva and the poorer classes of Sudras.

The solemn occasion when man shuffles off his mortal coil naturally offers ample matter for speculation to the imaginative Hindus. They attribute to the moon a sort of Zodiac composed of twenty-seven constellations, each of which presides at one of the twenty-seven days of its periodical course. The last five are all more or less fatal. Woe to the relatives of him who dies in the period when the moon travels through them! The body of the deceased, in this case, cannot be removed from the house either by the door or the window. It is absolutely necessary to make an opening through the wall for this purpose. And this is not all. To escape the unfortunate accidents which would inevitably follow such an untimely death, the most prudent course is to abandon the house for six months, or at least three months, according to the degree of the malign influence of the constellation which was in the ascendant on the day of death[1]. At the end of this time they remove the bushes with which they stuffed up the front door of the ill-fated house where the death occurred. The remotest corners of the building are carefully purified, a purification which can be completed only by the intervention of a *purohita*, who has to be called in, and of course paid for. Finally, a meal must be given to the Brahmins and presents must be made to them; after that the occupants will have nothing else to fear.

A death happening on Saturday entails almost equally serious inconveniences. It is a hundred to one in that case that another member of the same household will die before the year is out[2]. The only way to stave it off is to sacrifice a living animal, such as a ram, a he-goat, a fowl, &c., as a burnt offering.

Thus superstition follows the Hindu even to the last days of his existence. We have already seen what silly fancies assail him from his cradle. The child born under an unlucky star is not only himself destined, according to common belief, to all sorts of troubles and accidents during the course of his life, but he brings bad luck to those with whom he is united by the ties of blood; and it is not uncommon to see parents, convinced

[1] Nowadays it is customary simply to shut up the room in which a man dies.—ED.

[2] It is also believed that a death on a Thursday entails two other deaths in the same family.—ED.

of the truth of these so-called malign influences, quietly abandoning on a high-road innocent babes who happened to be born on a certain day which the prognostications of the professional astrologer have signified to be unlucky, or else handing them over to any one who is bold enough to run the risk of assuming charge of such an ill-omened burden[1]. There are even unnatural parents of this kind who go the length of cruelly strangling or drowning these tiny victims of most stupid and at the same time most atrocious superstition[2].

[1] Nowadays this is not practised.—Ed.

[2] Cases of infanticide were in quite recent times witnessed daily, especially on the banks of the Ganges, until at last the Government of Lord Wellesley declared that any one guilty of such a crime would be tried in the courts and punished with all the rigour of the law. This measure has had the good effect of diminishing the evil, but has not rooted it out altogether.—Dubois.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Third Condition of Brahmins, viz. *Vanaprastha*, or Dweller in the Jungle. —The Respect paid to *Vanaprasthas*.—Conjectures as to their Origin.—Comparison between them and the Wise Men of Greece and other Philosophers.—The Rules of the *Vanaprasthas*.—Their Renunciation of the World and Pleasures of the Senses.—Their Moral Virtues.

THE third condition of Brahmins is that of *Vanaprastha*, that is to say, dweller in the jungle. I doubt if there are any of them left in the country watered by the Indus and the Ganges, where this sect of philosophers certainly flourished at one time in great numbers. The sect has entirely disappeared from the Peninsula of India [1]. In ancient times the desire of sanctifying themselves in solitude and of reaching a higher degree of spiritual perfection induced numerous Brahmins to abandon

[1] It is indeed wholly improbable that all Brahmins conformed to this rule, but the second verse of the sixth book of the Laws of Manu prescribes that when the father of a family perceives his hair to be turning grey, or as soon as his first grandchild is born, and after he has paid his three debts, he is to retire to a forest, and there to practise austerities as a hermit:—

Having taken up his sacred fire (*agnihotram*) and all the domestic utensils for making oblations to it, and having gone forth from the town to the forest, let him dwell there with all his organs of sense well restrained.

With many kinds of pure food let him perform the five *maha-yajnas* or 'devotional rites.'

Let him also offer the *vaitanika* oblations with the (three sacred) fires according to rule.

Let him roll backwards and forwards on the ground, or stand all day on tiptoe (*prapadaih*); let him move about by alternately standing up and sitting down, going to the waters to bathe at the three *savanas* (sunrise, sunset, and midday).

Let him practise the rules of the lunar penance.

In the hot weather let him be a *panca-tapas*.

Let him offer libations (*tarpayet*) to the gods and *Pitris*, performing ablutions at the three *savanas*.

Having consigned the three sacred fires (*vaitanan*) to his own person (by swallowing the ashes) according to prescribed rules, let him remain without fire, without habitation, feeding on roots and fruits, practising the vow of a *muni* (i. e. the *mauna-vrata* of perpetual silence).—ED.

their residence in towns and their intercourse with mankind, and to go and live in the jungle with their wives, whom they persuaded to follow them. They were favourably received by those who had originally conceived this praiseworthy resolution, and from them they learned the rules of their life of seclusion. These philosophers brought much distinction to the Brahmin caste; and it even seems likely that the Brahmin caste owed its origin to them. They are still revered as the first teachers of the human race and the first lawgivers of their country.

There can be no doubt that it was the fame of these *Vanaprastha* Brahmins that excited so lively a curiosity in Alexander the Great. They were in fact none other than those Brachmanes and Gymnosophists whose customs, doctrines, and learning have been described by several ancient historians.

Mention is often made of these hermit Brahmins in the ancient books of India. They are there represented as living in solitary cells, entirely cut off from all intercourse with mankind and from all the distractions of social life, and devoting their whole time to spiritual observances.

The most famous and ancient of all were the seven great Penitents whom I have already several times mentioned. Their successors, too, continued to enjoy the highest renown. Kings paid them honours which reached the point of worship, and attached the greatest value to their benedictions. Princes trembled at the mere idea of incurring their wrath, convinced that their curse would entail direful consequences. This is how the author of the *Padma-purana* describes the reception of some *Vanaprasthas* by the great King of Dilipa:—

'Filled with unutterable joy and respect, he bowed himself to the ground before them. Then making them sit down, he washed their feet, drank some of the water that he used for that purpose, and poured the rest over his head. Joining his two hands together and putting them to his forehead, he made a profound obeisance and addressed them in these words: "The happiness which I feel to-day on seeing you can only be the reward of the good works which I must have done in previous existences; at the sight of your sacred feet, which are verily lotus flowers, I possess all that heart can desire; my body is perfectly pure, now that I have had the honour of seeing you. You are the gods whom I worship; I know no other

gods but you. I am henceforth as pure as the water of the Ganges."'

It is not surprising that kings humbled themselves in the presence of these sages, seeing that the great gods themselves paid respect to them, and considered themselves honoured by their visits. Indeed there is no mark of distinction and respect which the gods did not bestow upon the *Vanaprasthas*, who, on their part, treated the gods with scant courtesy and very often with insolence. For example, one *Vanaprastha*, who visited the three principal Hindu divinities in turn, began by giving each a kick to see how they endured such an affront, and to learn their character by their behaviour. In fact, these penitents were wont to assume a kind of superiority over the gods, and punished them severely when they found them to blame. The evil deeds, and especially the lasciviousness, of Brahma, Siva, and Devendra, brought upon them the curses of many penitents.

The mythologies which relate these adventures, however absurd they may be, at any rate prove in what high estimation these hermits were held, and how ancient is their origin. On this last point I wish to add certain considerations to those which I have already mentioned, and will then leave the subject to my reader's own judgement.

I start again with the very probable hypothesis that in the seven Hindu Penitents who escaped the catastrophe of the Flood, are to be recognized the seven sons of Japheth, some of whom at the time of the dispersion of mankind must have come by way of Tartary and established themselves in India, becoming the first founders of Brahminism and the lawgivers of the families whose descendants peopled this portion of the globe. As is the case with all ancient civilized nations, time wrought changes in the laws which they instituted, regulating religious worship, morality, and the maintenance of social order: indeed, in all the wise measures which they took to preserve the well-being of their fellow-men. This is the common fate of all institutions which do not bear the impress of God. They either collapse altogether or become disfigured under the ever-repeated attacks of prejudice, passion, and, above all, personal interest. The simple but wise maxims of the first Hindu lawgivers soon degenerated into an abstract and subtle system of metaphysics, quite beyond the comprehension of all but a few adepts; and these latter, moved by

a common ambition to lord it over their fellows, gradually formed an exclusive community isolated from the rest of the nation. The privacy of their life, their frugality, their contempt of riches, the purity of their morals, could not fail to gain for these earliest Brahmins the respect and veneration of the common people.

There can be no doubt that philosophy flourished in India before it had been so much as thought of in Greece. Of what account, in truth, was the learning of Greece, of what account her system of polity, until Pythagoras, Lycurgus, and other famous Greek travellers, animated by the desire of educating themselves, studied the manners and customs of Asiatic peoples, and borrowed, from the Hindus especially, many precepts and doctrines?

But though the philosophy of the Greeks was of later origin than that of the *Vanaprasthas*, it soon surpassed the latter in the clearness of its principles and the soundness of its morality. Under the guidance of the Greek philosophers an immense impulse was given to the cultivation of learning; and the most profound and luminous investigations were made regarding the nature of the Deity, until the gods of paganism were shorn of all the false glory which had hitherto surrounded them. The *Vanaprasthas* had already, it is true, made great progress in this direction; but yielding to the impulses of an unbridled imagination, they soon buried their philosophy beneath a heap of false ideas and vain imaginings with regard to the means of purifying the soul and to the spiritual side of life generally. The ridiculous principles which they enunciated ended by becoming, in their eyes, divinely sanctioned obligations; and from that time forward the wisest Hindus really became the most foolish.

This chimera of soul-purification which they pursued, so to speak, beyond the range of their own reasoning powers, led them from error to error, from pitfall to pitfall, until they likewise dragged down with them the people whose oracles they were.

The question arises, was there ever any connexion between the Hindu Gymnosophists and Zoroaster, or the Magi of Persia? All that I can say in answer to this question is that, though some resemblances may be traced between the Ghebres, or descendants

of the ancient Persian fire-worshippers, and the Hindus in the worship which they both render to this element and to the sun, their religious doctrines and customs are in every other respect entirely different. Indeed, so far as I can see, the Hindu religious and political system is *sui generis* in its very foundations, and contains special characteristics of which no trace can be found in that of any other nation.

Only minute examination can bring to light certain features of resemblance between the moral and religious principles professed by Hindus and those of other ancient schools of philosophy in other countries. Several of the Brahminical rules of conduct correspond closely with those followed by Zeno and the Stoics; their plan of making their pupils learn everything by heart resembles that of the Druids; their taste for a solitary life, like that of the *Vanaprasthas*, is also shared by the Rechabites, the Therapeutics, the Children of the Prophet, the Magi of Persia, the Essenes of Egypt. But what arguments can be drawn from these feeble analogies to disprove the antiquity and originality of Hindu philosophy? And possibly it was the Hindus that furnished the original models, while the others only imitated them.

The life of a *Vanaprastha* was founded on the rigorous observance of certain established rules to which he bound himself on initiation. Here are some of the principal, as found in Hindu books, together with a few remarks of my own on each:—

I. 'The *Vanaprastha* must renounce the society of other men, even of his own caste, and must take up his abode in the jungle far from towns and all habitations.'

He did not, however, renounce the world so entirely but that he was permitted to appear in it from time to time; and of this there are several instances in Hindu works. Besides, after he had passed thirty-seven years in solitude, the penitent might resume his place in society without losing any of the consideration which belonged to him as a *Vanaprastha*.

II. 'He must take his wife with him, who will subject herself to the same rule of life as himself.'

It is by this rule especially that the *Vanaprastha* is distinguished from the *Sannyasi*, who is obliged to live in celibacy and renounce his wife, if he is already married. But though complete continence is not enjoined on the *Vanaprastha*, he is

directed to use the privileges of marriage with the greatest moderation.

III. 'He must live only in huts covered with leaves, more comfortable dwelling-places being forbidden to those who profess to renounce the world and all its pleasures.'

I may remark that houses thatched with palmyra or cocoanut leaves are very common in India.

IV. 'He must not wear cotton cloths; he must only wear materials made of vegetable fibres.'

This latter kind of cloth is not uncommon in Northern India. It is as soft as silk to the touch, and has the advantage, inestimable for a Hindu, of not being, like cotton, liable to pollution.

V. 'He must observe with the most scrupulous accuracy the rules prescribed for Brahmins, especially those regarding ablutions and the prayers accompanying them, which must be performed three times a day.'

VI. 'He must pay the greatest attention to the choice of his food. His usual diet should be the plants and fruits which grow wild in the jungle. He must abstain from all those whose root or stem grows in the form of a bulb.'

I have already remarked that the Brahmins of the present day retain this rule of diet.

VII. 'Meditation and the contemplation of Parabrahma must occupy all his leisure. He must strive by this means to attain to union with the Supreme Deity.'

I will detail elsewhere the different steps by which this union is achieved.

VIII. 'Sacrifice, and above all that of the *yagnam*, should be reckoned one of the principal religious exercises.'

It will be seen in the following chapter of what this famous *yagnam* sacrifice consists.

The acquisition of knowledge was another of the principal occupations of these hermits. Theology, metaphysics, and astronomy were what they cultivated by choice. Many of them devoted themselves to the vain study of astrology; and it is to them that the Hindus are indebted for the majority of their books of magic, from which magicians even at the present day learn the tricks which cause them to be so much in request.

According to these *Vanaprastha* philosophers, three principal

desires are innate in man, viz. land, gold, and women; or, in other words, ambition, wealth, and luxury[1].

By the *desire of land*, they understood ancestral estates and the landed properties that a man can acquire in the course of his life, the possession of a whole kingdom not excepted. They had so completely severed themselves from the temporal blessings of this world, and had showed themselves so entirely disinterested, that their exhortations and example sometimes induced even kings to leave their dominions in contempt for the pomp and circumstance by which they were surrounded, and to join with them in leading an ascetic life in the jungle. Hindu books mention with approbation several cases of this sort. These anchorite princes sometimes outdid the *Vanaprasthas* themselves in fervour and austerity; and the latter, far from showing themselves jealous, as a reward for such great zeal granted the princes the signal favour of allowing them to become penitent Brahmins, thus enrolling them in their own caste.

By the *desire of gold* the *Vanaprasthas* understood not this metal alone, but also all the honours and luxuries of life which can be procured with money, such as lucrative employments, valuable household goods, fine houses, rich apparel, dainty fare, &c. They displayed a complete aversion from all these false blessings. The furniture of their huts was confined to a few brass and earthenware vessels. They considered themselves passing rich when they possessed a few cows to furnish the milk which formed their chief diet; and it was the gift of one of these animals that pleased them most. Hindu books relate extravagant stories about the cows of these ascetics. For instance, one of them furnished not only the milk but all the victuals necessary for an entire army[2]. A neighbouring prince heard of this wonderful beast, and conceived the plan of carrying her off by force from the *Vanaprastha*, who had received her from the gods as a reward for his great piety; but the cow, as brave as she was fruitful, charged the prince's army and completely routed it!

As these devotees lived very frugally, their expenditure

[1] These three great desires are expressed by the words *loka-vanchana*, *artha-vanchana*, *sthree-vanchana*.—DUBOIS.

[2] This is the cow *Kamadhenu* mentioned in a previous chapter.—ED.

was but small. The offerings brought to them by their numerous admirers were not only sufficient to keep them in food, but also placed them in a position to make doles to the poor, and to entertain other devotees who visited them. They ate only one meal a day. The use of intoxicating liquors was strictly forbidden, though this deprivation troubled them but little. Accustomed from infancy to look on such beverages with horror, they regarded drunkenness as the most degrading of vices.

By the *desire of women* the *Vanaprasthas* understood all the sensual pleasures which are not rendered lawful by the sacred bonds of marriage; and even in the exercise of the privileges of married life they were enjoined to exercise extreme moderation. Thus they preserved the tradition of those divine words which were spoken to our first ancestors, 'Increase, and multiply, and cover the earth.' They recognized no other end or object in the union of the sexes than the propagation of the human species, and beyond this saw nothing but intemperance and fornication. Moreover they were persuaded that a man could not acquire wisdom, and the happiness which results from it, except by subduing the passions, and especially the one which holds the greatest sway over mankind and has the most enervating effects on the mental faculties. They believed that a single act of incontinence was sufficient to destroy the virtue of many years passed in the most austere penance. Hindu books relate innumerable examples of the praiseworthy and unceasing efforts which they made to bridle the lust of the flesh. But by one of those contradictions which abound in Hindu books, side by side with the account of the punishments inflicted on a hermit for his inability to conquer his sensual passions, we find, related with expressions of enthusiasm and admiration, the feats of debauchery ascribed to some of their *munis*—feats that lasted without interruption for thousands of years; and (burlesque idea!) it is to their pious asceticism that they are said to owe this unquenchable virility.

Be all this as it may, if the moral virtues of the *Vanaprasthas* were neither real nor lasting, seeing that they were based, not on humility, but on ostentatious pride, we must nevertheless admit that, whatever motives influenced them, they at any rate were not inferior to the ancient philosophers of Greece. They

practised hospitality and enjoined it on others. The founder of their sect directed them to look out of doors before every meal to see if there was anybody near who was hungry; and it was their duty to invite such a person to eat with them, whether he was a friend or an enemy. It was a sublime and admirable precept; but I will not commit myself to assert that it was strictly observed in practice. They were above all enjoined to restrain their anger, and greatly prided themselves on their patience and moderation under the insults to which they were sometimes exposed. Nevertheless, in spite of such admirable philosophy, it seems certain that it took very little to rouse their spleen. A wholesome dread of provoking their resentment was generally felt; for they were on such occasions unsparing with their curses, which, as we know, had terrible consequences.

Justice, humanity, honesty, compassion, disinterestedness, in fact all the virtues, were recognized by them; and they taught them to others by precept and example. Hence it is that the Hindus profess, at least in theory, almost the same principles of morality as ourselves; and if they do not practise all the obligations which one man owes to another in civilized society, it is not because they are ignorant of them.

CHAPTER XXXII

Sacrifices of the *Vanaprastha* Brahmins.—Sacrifice of the *Yagnam*.—The Lesser *Yagnam*.—The Greater *Yagnam*.—The Giants, Enemies of the *Vanaprasthas*.

THE most common sacrifice among the *Vanaprasthas* was that of *homam*. They performed it, as I have already mentioned, by kindling a fire, throwing into it some grains of rice soaked in ghee, and reciting *mantrams*. Fire seems to have been the object worshipped, and it was offered sometimes specially to the sun, sometimes to all the planets. These hermits also offered other daily sacrifices to the gods, consisting of simple products of nature, such as flowers, incense, rice, vegetables, and fruits. Their whole time was occupied in such sacrifices, repeated several times every day, in ablutions, and in meditation on the perfections of Parabrahma. Though it is certain that sacrifices of blood have been common in India from the remotest ages, we have no evidence that the Brahmins ever participated in them in the character of sacrificers. Such functions were always entrusted to people of other castes; and even Rajahs did not disdain to perform them. In the present day, the Brahmins do not officiate in temples where it is the custom to sacrifice living victims.

There was only one occasion on which the *Vanaprasthas* could, without scruple, deprive a living creature of existence; it was when they made the famous sacrifice of *yagnam*, which is still held in great honour among modern Brahmins. A ram is the victim usually offered: but such is the horror with which they regard the shedding of blood, that they either beat the

animal to death or strangle it, instead of slaughtering it[1]. Latter-day Brahmins, however, are not all agreed about the lawfulness of this sacrifice. The Vaishnavas regard it as an abominable practice, in which they obstinately refuse to participate. They maintain that it is an innovation of much more recent date than their ancient religious laws, and that it is contrary to the most sacred and inviolable rule which forbids murder under any form and for any reason whatever. This doctrine of the Vaishnavas is one of the chief reasons why they are accused of heresy by other Brahmins[2].

The sacrifice of *yagnam* is, in the opinion of its advocates, the most meritorious sacrifice of any[3]. It is considered extremely acceptable to the gods; and the person who offers it, or causes it to be offered, may count on abundant temporal blessings and on the entire remission of the sins which he has committed for a hundred generations. Nothing less than such advantages was necessary to determine the Brahmins to overcome the horror with which the destruction of a living creature inspired them. Furthermore, Brahmins possess the exclusive privilege of performing this sacrifice. Other castes may not even be present at it, though by a special grace they are authorized to provide the means of carrying it out. The expenses that it necessitates are very considerable, for crowds of Brahmins attend the solemnity, and each one must receive a present from the person who offers the *yagnam*—a circumstance which suggests that it is not so much devotion as interest that takes them there.

1 This operation is usually performed by men of the potter caste.—Ed.

2 Nevertheless the sacrifice of *yagnam* is performed by the *Vadakalais* among the Vishnavites in Southern India.—Ed.

3 *The Indian Mirror*, the leading native newspaper of Calcutta, quite recently (1896) remarked: 'What are the Hindus doing to mitigate the rigour of the water-famine and the cholera epidemic? How many of them have even recollected the injunctions of the Vedas, so far as the *yagnas* are concerned? A *yagna* on a large scale, which not only means the feeding of the sacred fire with ghee, and the burning of incense, but also the feeding of the poor in large numbers daily for months together, will cost a hundred thousand rupees or more. If the Vedas are to be relied on, such a *yagna* does good always both to the rulers and the ruled. Vedic *yagnas* have not been performed in India for many and many a year. Is there no true Hindu among the millions of India who would come forward and support us in our proposal? Are there not among the Maharajahs and Rajahs of the land a few still who would be found ready and willing to bear the expense of such a *yagna*?'—Ed.

However, this sacrifice is rarely offered, few people being able or willing to bear the great cost which it entails. The following are the principal ceremonies which are observed:—

The person who is going to preside at the *yagnam* announces the day fixed for the sacrifice throughout the whole district, and invites all Brahmins to attend. It is necessary that Brahmins of each of the four Vedas should be present; if a representative of each of these classes does not appear, the solemnity must be put off. Neither Sudras, whatever their rank may be, nor Brahmins who are infirm or diseased, or blind or lame, &c., nor Brahmins who are widowers, may be present at it.

A ram is chosen after undergoing the most minute inspection. It must be perfectly white, about three years of age, in good condition and well proportioned in every respect[1]. A *purohita* proclaims the favourable moment when the ceremony can begin, and the assembled Brahmins, who sometimes number over two thousand, hasten to the appointed spot. A hole is first dug; and after the *homam* and other ordinary preliminaries, a large fire is lighted and is kept burning by logs of wood cut from the sacred trees *aswatta, alai, icham, porasu*, and by a great quantity of *darbha* grass. The whole is drenched with ghee, which causes the flames to rise to a great height. In the meanwhile the *purohita* recites *mantrams* in a loud voice, scraps of which are loudly repeated by the spectators. The ram is then brought into the midst of the assembly, rubbed with oil, put in a bath, and then stained with *akshatas*. The body and horns are garlanded with flowers, and cords made of *darbha* grass are tied, or rather tightly bound, round the animal. All the time the *purohita* is repeating *mantrams*, the supposed object of which is to kill the victim. This obviously inadequate proceeding, however, is supplemented by closing the nostrils, ears, and mouth of the animal while the Brahmins present deal heavy blows on the beast, and finally one of them suffocates it by pressing his knee on its throat. The *purohita* and his attendants meanwhile repeat *mantrams* in a loud voice, and these are supposed to ensure a quick and painless death for the victim. It would be a very inauspicious

[1] This is incorrect, inasmuch as the victim must be perfectly black. It is usually presented by the goatherds as a free gift.—ED.

omen if the ram uttered the slightest cry while it was enduring these tortures[1].

As soon as the animal is dead, the Brahmin who presides at the ceremony cuts open the stomach and tears out the entrails along with the fat. These he holds suspended over the fire, the fat dropping into it as it melts. At the same time liquefied butter is poured over the fire as a libation.

The victim is skinned and hacked in pieces, which are then fried in butter. A portion is thrown into the fire as an oblation, while the rest is divided between the Brahmin who has presided at the sacrifice and the person who bears the expense of it. These in their turn distribute their portions to the Brahmins present, who scramble wildly for the scraps and devour them as something sacred and auspicious. This is particularly remarkable, because it is the only occasion on which the Brahmins may, without committing sin, eat of that which has had life or the germ of life.

They then offer to the fire, as *neiveddya*, boiled and raw rice, the latter husked and well washed.

All these ceremonies and a great number of others being over, betel, which has previously been placed all round the fire, is distributed to the Brahmins. Finally, the person who has borne the expense of the sacrifice makes gifts, in money and clothes, to all present, according to the rank and dignity of each; a costly munificence, considering the multitude of those who take part in the ceremony.

The Brahmin who has presided at the *yagnam* is henceforth considered an important personage. He has acquired, for instance, the right of keeping up a perpetual fire in his house. If this fire, by some accident, were to be extinguished, he would be forced to rekindle it, not with light procured from a flint, but with that produced by rubbing two pieces of dry wood together. When a Brahmin honoured in this way dies, his funeral pile must be lighted with this fire. After that the fire is allowed to die out of itself.

I have never been able to discover whether this sacrifice has any particular divinity for its object. It would appear, however, that the Brahmin who offers it is free to dedicate it to any god

[1] If the victim utters any sound it is believed that the family of the Brahmin who offers the *yagnam* will gradually become extinct.—ED.

that he chooses, provided the deity be one of the first rank. Be this as it may, the fire of the *yagnam* bears the name of *agni-iswara*, which means the *god of fire*, as if it were offered to this element alone.

Hindu books testify that this sacrifice was much more frequent in the time of the old *Vanaprasthas*; but then it was performed in a much simpler manner, and was not accompanied with the foolish ostentation that was afterwards associated with it.

Yet, after all, this sacrifice is a mere nothing compared with the grand *yagnam*, the enormous cost of which has now caused it to fall into disuse. Trustworthy persons have assured me, however, that at the beginning of the last century the King of Amber (Jeypore), in Upper India, had it performed with the utmost magnificence. The gift which he made to his high priest alone is said to have cost a lakh of rupees, while the Brahmins who attended it, to the number of several thousands, all received presents proportionate to their rank[1].

The mythical stories of the Hindus make frequent mention of this splendid sacrifice, and the blessings which it procured for those who caused it to be performed. The gods themselves, and also the giants, during the wars which they waged against each other, seldom failed to perform this religious ceremony, of which one of the least remarkable results was to procure a certain victory over the enemy. It was usual, when the solemnities of the *yagnam* were over, for the prince on whose behalf it had been celebrated to seat himself on a high throne for the space of forty-eight minutes, and during that time the Brahmins present were permitted to ask him for anything they pleased. And the prince, on his part, was bound to satisfy their demands, however extravagant, even had they extended to demanding his kingdom, his wife, and everything he most highly esteemed. If he failed to satisfy a single one of these numerous requests, the sacrifice would have been of no avail.

A king of the olden times, says a Hindu chronicler, having caused the grand *yagnam* to be performed before setting out for a war which he was planning against a neighbouring potentate, presented a bushel of pearls to each of the Brahmins present, who were thirty thousand in number.

[1] *Yagnam* sacrifices on a smaller scale are performed nowadays in Southern India.—ED.

Four kinds of victims might be offered in sacrifice, namely, a horse, a cow, an elephant, or a man. The first was called *asvamedha*, the second *gomedha*, the third *rajasuya*, and the fourth *naramedha*. But they commonly sacrificed a horse; and hence the sacrifice is generally designated by the name of *asvamedha* (sacrifice of a horse).

The victim was chosen before its birth; and when the mare, its mother, had foaled, her offspring was reared for three years with extraordinary care and trouble. Continual sacrifices were made to Indra, that he might watch over the young animal; to Yama, that he might preserve it from death and every accident; to Varuna, the god of water, and also to the clouds, that they might cause a fertilizing rain to fall and plenty of grass to grow for its nourishment. Similar requests were also made to a number of other gods.

The victim was afterwards let loose and allowed to roam freely over a wide stretch of country, though it was followed everywhere by numerous attendants to prevent its being stolen. The gods, or the giants, or the princes against whom the sacrifice was to be directed would come with all their armies in search of this valuable animal, and try to seize it by force or stratagem. If they succeeded, the sacrifice was averted, and they were thereby delivered from the disasters which its accomplishment would have brought upon them. Indeed, the wonders wrought by this grand sacrifice were so mighty as to render the prince who had it performed invulnerable and certain of victory, for amongst other things it furnished him with enchanted weapons, a single one of which was sufficient to overthrow a whole army.

I will spare the reader long and wearisome details of the innumerable ceremonies which took place during the celebration of the *asvamedha*, and will content myself with giving a short extract from a story which refers to this famous sacrifice, and which at the same time describes one of the ten *Avatars* of Vishnu:—

'The giant-emperor Bali caused to be performed the grand sacrifice of the horse, the irresistible effect of which was to secure for him the overthrow of all other sovereigns and the conquest of the whole world. To counteract such fatal consequences, Vishnu the Preserver presented himself in the

form of a Brahmin dwarf before the tyrant, and supplicated him humbly for the grant of a plot of ground only three soles of his own feet in area to enable him to offer sacrifices. The Brahmin's request appeared comical to the giant, and was granted without hesitation. Then Vishnu changed his shape, and with one of his feet he covered the whole earth, and with the other occupied all the space between earth and heaven. Then addressing the giant, he said: "Where shall I find room for the third sole?" "On my head," answered the enemy of the gods, who then recognized, but too late, with whom he had to deal. The giant thought he might save his life by thus placing himself at the mercy of Vishnu the Preserver. But it happened otherwise. Vishnu placed his foot on the head of the giant and precipitated the monster into *Patalam* (hell), and delivered the world of that great scourge.'

But let us return to the *Vanaprastha* Brahmins. It appears, according to the Hindu books, that they experienced great difficulties in the accomplishment of their sacrifices. Their declared enemies, the giants, and the gods themselves, were continually playing evil pranks with them. For instance, their enemies made themselves invisible, and, flying in the air, defiled the offerings by letting fall upon them pieces of meat or other impure substances, so that these pious acts were of no avail.

I should have written at less length about these famous giants, if they had not seemed to me to be grotesque representations of those of Holy Scripture[1], whose crimes in a great measure caused the Flood. This race of men again flourished after that great catastrophe, and were not entirely destroyed until the time of Joshua[2].

The Hindu giants are represented as being of such colossal stature that on one occasion, in order to wake one of them, it was necessary for several elephants to walk over his body. Even then the giant hardly felt the discomfort of this enormous weight; but, by dint of stamping on him, the huge animals at last produced a slight sensation, resembling the tickling which an ordinary man feels when an ant or a fly crawls over him. It was this tickling, rather than the weight of the elephants, which roused the giant, the hairs of whose body were like the

[1] Genesis vi. 4.

[2] Numbers xiii.; Joshua xi.

trunks of full-grown forest trees. During one of his wars with certain gods, this same giant fastened a huge rock to each of his hairs, and thus equipped, he advanced into the middle of the enemy's army, gave himself a good shake, and thus hurled off the rocks, which falling right and left crushed his enemies to the last man.

The giant Ravana, who carried off Seeta, Rama's wife, had ten heads. His palace in the Island of Ceylon, of which he was king, was of such an enormous height that at midday the sun passed under one of its arcades.

These giants were all of an extremely mischievous disposition, especially the Brahmin giants. A great number of this caste had, by the way, been turned into giants as a punishment for former crimes. In fact, there were whole armies of them, and sometimes there was civil war between them, though more often they joined forces in fighting against the gods. Occasionally they adopted a hermit's life, without thereby changing their character, or becoming better disposed. The penance performed by the giant Bhasmasura was so long and severe, that he thereby induced Siva to grant him the power of reducing to ashes all those on whose heads he placed his hands. The favour thus obtained, the ungrateful wretch decided to let Siva himself, his benefactor, have some experience of the power newly conferred upon him. Siva was at his wits' end to know how to escape from his enemy, when fortunately he was saved by a stratagem of Viṣhnu. The latter persuaded the giant to put his hand on his own head, which he did without thinking, and reduced himself to ashes.

The above is a sample of Hindu mythology.

It may be presumed that these giant enemies of the *Vanaprasthas* were merely the chiefs of the countries in which the hermits had taken up their abode. These chiefs, frightened by the continual sacrifices and mystic rites of the formidable strangers, tried to get rid of them by stirring up quarrels among them and otherwise interfering with their religious practices. Except the first of these hermit *Vanaprasthas*, most of those who embraced this kind of life gave themselves up entirely to the cultivation of magic and astrology, and, impotent though their mysterious practices were in reality, they were easily able, with the help of their false prestige, to spread terror in feeble and

credulous minds. Some enthusiastic poet, in relating the history of the quarrels between these hermit Brahmins and the mighty princes who hated them, no doubt turned the latter into giants. Certainly no more than this was required to make the legend credible among a people so addicted to the marvellous. Be this as it may, it appears certain that the attacks made on the *Vanaprasthas* finally sapped their power to its very foundations, for the sect no longer exists in India.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Penance as a Means of purifying the Soul.—The Penance of the *Vanaprasthas.* —Modern Gymnosophists, or Naked Penitents.—Purification by Fire.

THE ancient hermit-philosophers of India maintained that it was necessary to perform divers acts of penance in order to disperse the phantoms of illusion, or *Maya*, by which men are seduced and led astray. It was only by penances, they contended, that man could break through the trammels of his personal passions and everyday surroundings, which held the soul enthralled. The right degree of excellence and spirituality necessary for the emancipation of the soul, they urged, could only be obtained, little by little, by the exercise of continuous penances. By these means alone could the soul be reunited for ever to the Supreme Divinity, to Parabrahma; and it was only when he had achieved this state of perfection that the penitent had the right to cry: '*Aham Brahma!*' I am Brahma! I am the Supreme Being!

Is it to be wondered at that men who, in this pursuit of spiritual perfection, were actuated only by motives of pride and self-conceit, when once they attained, according to their own vain presumption, the state of perfection at which they aimed—is it to be wondered at, I say, that these men looked down upon all the rest of their fellow-men with ineffable disdain, whatever their social rank might be, and considered them as degraded beings still wallowing in the mire of vice, slaves to their own passions[1]?

[1] The Abbé is hardly just in placing such a low value on this pride of righteousness. The sacred Hindu books are unanimous in describing these saintly men as gentle, quiet, and loving. The ignorant and narrow-minded Brahmin priests, however, cannot be said to have ever realized this high state of spiritual perfection. —ED.

This spiritual pride was still further encouraged by the tokens of respect, and even adoration, which the very greatest princes showered upon them. The apparent coldness with which they received such homage was certainly not the outcome of humility; it was rather caused by the firm conviction that they were only receiving what was their just due. Alexander the Great, who bent every one to his will, tried in vain to persuade one of the most celebrated of these *Vanaprasthas*, called Dindime or Dandamis, to visit him. However, the Hindu philosopher condescended to write to the conqueror, though the letter attributed to him by the Greek historians is evidently apocryphal, or at any rate interpolated with many embellishments and ideas which would never have occurred to a Gymnosophist. Be that as it may, some report that the Macedonian hero saw in it nothing but impious pride, while others maintain that he admired the writer's noble and philosophic courage.

And how, it may be asked, did these recluses obtain, through penance, perfect wisdom and perfect purity? The answer is, by three means: by the repression of their animal passions, by meditation, and by the mortification of the flesh and of all the senses; in fact, by complete self-abnegation.

By the first of these means they strove to destroy the three strongest passions to which man is subject, namely, wealth, land, and women; and to free themselves completely from all prejudices in respect of caste, rank, and honours. They further aimed at the repression of the most ordinary and natural impulses, even that of self-preservation. They insisted on their disciples being insensible to cold or heat, wind or rain, pain or sickness. They called this *moksha-sadhaka*, or the *practice of deliverance*. It may, therefore, be said that in many respects they were greater stoics than Zeno himself and greater cynics than Diogenes. At the same time it is more than probable that the majority of these *Vanaprasthas*, while applauding these strict doctrines, left the practice of them to the more enthusiastic.

There are penitents professing the principles of *moksha-sadhaka* even at the present day. Some of them go about quite naked, the object of this indecent practice being to convince the admiring public that they are no longer susceptible

to the temptations of lust. There is also a class of religious mendicants, called *Bairagis*, to be met with everywhere, who show themselves in public in a state of nature[1].

The people evince the greatest admiration for these unclothed devotees, and express the utmost wonder as to how they succeed in controlling a passion which is generally regarded as beyond control. Some say that the *Bairagis* owe this impotence to extreme sobriety in eating and drinking, while others assert that it is the result of the use of certain drugs. As to their alleged sobriety it is a mere fable. Generally speaking, they eat all kinds of meat and drink all kinds of intoxicating liquors without any shame, the practice of *moksha-sadhaka* and their status as *Sannyasi* acquitting them of all blame in this respect[2]. According to other authorities, the *Bairagis* attain this condition by purely mechanical means, that is, they attach to their generative organs a heavy weight which they drag about until the power of muscles and nerves is completely destroyed.

Some of these fanatics profess to conquer every feeling of disgust that is innate in a human being. They will even go so far as to eat human ordure without evincing any dislike. Instead of treating these degraded practices with the horror and contempt that they merit, the Hindus regard them with respect and honour, true to their custom of admiring everything that astonishes them.

Meditation, the second means of achieving spiritual perfection, accomplishes what the repression of the passions has only begun. It fills the soul with the thought of God and identifies it with the Divine Being, of which it is an emanation. This union with God is not brought about instantaneously, but gradually, as will be explained elsewhere. It was with the object of accomplishing, little by little, this blessed union with God that the *Vanaprastha* devoted a considerable portion of each day to meditation, combining this devout exercise with the ordinary sacrifices, particularly the sacrifice to fire, called *homam*.

The third means of arriving at spiritual perfection—mortification of the flesh—consists in leading a hard and austere life in rigorous and almost continuous fasting, and in voluntary

[1] This would now be punishable by law.—ED.

[2] This is only true of the lower types of *Bairagis*.—ED.

and self-inflicted punishments, and above all in never omitting the indispensable duty of frequent ablutions.

These *Vanaprastha* recluses were fully persuaded that the defilements of the soul were communicated to the body, and those of the body to the soul. They held that ablutions, while cleansing the body, also possessed the virtue of purifying the soul, especially if they were performed in the Ganges or in some other waters bearing an equal reputation for sanctity.

The purification of the soul was completed by fire; and that is the reason why the bodies of these penitents were burned after death.

Only their fellow Brahmin *Vanaprasthas* assisted at their funeral ceremonies, which, though fundamentally the same as those of the modern Brahmins, were much simpler and less elaborate. It was thought that the extreme care which the deceased had paid to the purification of himself during life rendered excessive care after death unnecessary and superfluous.

There was one sure and certain way by which the *Vanaprasthas* might attain to extreme perfection and gain inestimable happiness, and that was in cutting short their lives by throwing themselves into the fire. I do not mean to say that there have been many instances of this violation of the laws of nature amongst the *Vanaprasthas*. Only a single one has come to my own personal knowledge. I have read in a Hindu book that one of these recluses and his wife, having lived in retirement for a long time, and arrived at a very advanced age, and both of them being equally tired of this world, arranged their own funeral pile, quietly lay down upon it, then set fire to it with their own hands, and were thus consumed together. Having by this act of devotion arrived at the highest state of perfection, their souls were instantly united to the Divinity, and were exempted from reappearing on earth to undergo the successive transmigrations from one body to another which would have been their fate in the ordinary course of events.

There are still fanatics to be found who solemnly bind themselves to commit suicide, under the conviction that by the performance of this mad act they will ensure for themselves the immediate enjoyment of supreme blessedness.

The temple of Jagannath (Puri), and other places which superstition has rendered equally famous, have often been the

scenes of self-inflicted death. From time to time, too, one comes across lunatics travelling through the country, loudly proclaiming their intention of destroying themselves, and at the same time collecting the money with which to defray the expenses attendant on the solemn execution of their wicked vow. I knew one of these wretches to be the recipient of very considerable sums. He was received with the greatest enthusiasm and respect wherever he went. He was nicknamed 'Sava'[1] or 'the corpse,' and he always carried upraised in his hand the dagger with which he was going to kill himself; on the point of it was stuck a small lemon. Everything was in readiness for the horrible sacrifice, the victim himself having fixed the day on which it was to be consummated. Immense crowds had assembled out of curiosity, greatly pleased to think they were to witness a horrid sight; but the magistrate of the district, who was a humane and sensible man, caused the hero of the tragedy to be brought before him, took away his dagger, and ordered him to be conducted out of the district, absolutely forbidding him to re-enter the country. A few months afterwards, I learned that the maniac had carried out his dreadful vow on the banks of the Tungabudra, to the delight of an enormous crowd which had collected to enjoy the revolting spectacle. There is nothing improbable, therefore, in the story told by Diodorus Siculus of the Brahmin Calanus, who terminated his life by allowing himself to be burnt alive in the presence of Alexander's army.

The above are a few examples of the deplorable and fatal effects of Hindu superstition. Such are the natural results of the foolish theories of ancient philosophers, the most enlightened men of their times, as to the best means of purifying the soul and ensuring certain and everlasting happiness.

1 A corrupt form of the Sanskrit word *sapam*.—ED.

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Fourth State of the Brahmins, that of the *Sannyasi*.—Preparation for this Holy State.—Ceremonies of Initiation.—Rules to be followed by the *Sannyasi*.

THE fourth state to which a Brahmin can attain is that of a *sannyasi*, a state so sublime, according to the Hindu authors, that it ensures, even during the short space of a single lifetime, more spiritual blessedness than an ordinary man could attain in ten millions of regenerations [1].

The *sannyasi* is superior to the *vanaprastha*, inasmuch as the latter does not wholly renounce the world, being still connected with it to a certain extent by family ties; whilst the *sannyasi* imposes upon himself the painful sacrifice of leaving his wife and children. Like the *vanaprastha* he submits to severe privations, and furthermore takes a vow of poverty and resigns himself to living entirely on alms. Every Brahmin, before becoming a *sannyasi*, must have been a *grahastha*; that

[1] Book VI of the Laws of Manu directs him for the fourth period of his life to wander about as a *Bhikshu* or *Parivrajaka*, 'religious mendicant.' Here are a few rules for the regulation of this final stage of his existence, when he is sometimes called a *sannyasi*, 'one who has given up the world'; sometimes a *yati*, 'one who has suppressed his passions':—

Let him remain without fire, without habitation; let him resort once a day to the town for food, regardless of hardships, resolute, keeping a vow of silence, fixing his mind in meditation.

With hair, nails, and beard well clipped, carrying a bowl, a staff, and a pitcher, let him wander about continually, intent on meditation and avoiding injury to any being.

In this manner, having little by little abandoned all worldly attachments, and freed himself from all concern about pairs of opposites, he obtains absorption into the universal Spirit.—ED.

is to say, he must have been married and have acquitted himself of 'the great debt to his ancestors,' the first and most indispensable of duties in the eyes of a Hindu, that of perpetuating his species.

There are, however, a few examples of Brahmins who have become *sannyasis* while still young and unmarried. There are also, it is true, many penitents who have always been celibates; but they do not belong to the Brahmin caste.

A Brahmin is not allowed to become a *sannyasi* in a moment of remorse or from a sudden feeling of enthusiasm. His decision must be the result of calm and deliberate self-examination and reflection, and must be based on a sense of disgust for the world and its pleasures, and on an ardent desire to attain spiritual perfection. He must feel himself capable of complete severance from all earthly affairs. If he experiences the slightest inclination or longing for those things which the rest of mankind struggle for, he will thereby lose all the benefits of his life of penance.

When a Brahmin who aspires to the state of *sannyasi* has duly reflected on the step he is about to take, he calls together all the leading Brahmins of the neighbourhood, announces his intention, and begs them to be ready to receive his solemn vows with all the customary formalities and ceremonies.

On the day appointed for this important act, the candidate first purifies himself by bathing. He procures ten pieces of cotton cloth such as are worn on the shoulders, four of them, dyed a dark yellow (*kavi*), being destined for his own use, the other six being given as presents to men of his own caste. He also provides himself with a bamboo staff that has seven knots or joints, some small silver and copper coins, flowers, *akshatas*, sandalwood, and, above all, some *pancha-gavia*. He drinks a little of the last-named beverage, and then repairs to the spot where the ceremony is to take place.

The officiating *guru* performs the ordinary *homam* and *puja*, and then proceeds to whisper into the candidate's ear such *mantrams* and instructions as are prescribed for the state he is about to enter. He next commands him, first, to don one of the yellow cloths that he has brought, and then, in token of his renunciation of his caste as well as of the pomps and vanities of this world, to break his triple cord and to allow the tuft of hair

which grows on every Brahmin's head to be shaved off. All this is accompanied by *mantrams* and other absurdities which it is unnecessary to describe in detail.

The ceremony ended, the candidate takes his seven-knotted bamboo in one hand[1] and a gourd full of water in the other, while under his arm he carries an antelope's skin. These three things are all that he is now allowed to call his own. Then he thrice drinks a little *pancha-gavia*, and also some of the water in his gourd; he repeats the *mantrams* which his *guru* has taught him; and he is then a *sannyasi* for life. All that remains for him to do is to present to the attendant Brahmins the cloths and money which he has brought with him.

The newly initiated must conform strictly to the instructions that he has received from his *guru*, and must follow minutely all the rules laid down for persons of his profession. The following

[1] One cannot fail to recognize in the Hindu *sannyasis* a class of men similar to those of the Jews who were imbued with Rabbinical doctrines in connexion with cabala and numbers, and to the Greeks who held the wild theories of Pythagoras—idiotic dreamers who crammed the minds of their fellow-countrymen with foolish notions. We know that the cabala believes the world to be full of spirits, which one can in the course of time resemble, by practising purity of life and meditation. The *sannyasi's* staff with its seven knots is not merely intended to aid him in walking. It is, like Aaron's rod, an instrument of divination. The seven knots are also not without a mysterious significance. Who has not heard of the perfection of the number seven? The high esteem in which it is held by the Hindus is clearly proved by the numerous sacred places and objects which are always spoken of in groups of seven, such as the Seven Penitents (*sapta rishis*), the Seven Holy Cities (*sapta pura*), the Seven Sacred Islands (*sapta dwipa*), the Seven Seas (*sapta samudra*), the Seven Sacred Rivers (*sapta nadi*), the Seven Sacred Mountains (*sapta parvata*), the Seven Sacred Jungles (*sapta arania*), the Seven Sacred Trees (*sapta vruksha*), the Seven Castes (*sapta kula*), the Seven Inferior and Superior Worlds (*sapta loka*), &c. Seven too is an uneven number, and all the uneven numbers are considered lucky. For example, take the famous *Trimurti* (Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva). Virgil also says:—

'Terna tibi haec primum triplici diversa colore
Licia circumdo, terque haec altaria circum
Effigiem duco: *numero Deus impare gaudet* . . .
Necte tribus nodis ternos, Amarylli, colores.'

While on the subject of the *sannyasi's* staff I might refer to the rods of Moses, of Elisha, and of all the prophets; the augur's staff, the pastoral staffs of the Fauns and sylvan deities, and those of the Cynics; but I will leave to the intelligent reader the task of making what comparisons he thinks proper.—DUBOIS.

are the chief of these, to which I have added a few remarks of my own :—

I. 'Every morning, after he has performed his ablutions, a *sannyasi* must smear ashes on his body[1].'

The majority of Hindus only smear them over their foreheads.

II. 'He must take only one meal every day.'

This rule of fasting is followed not only by the Brahmin *sannyasis*, but by many others who by severe abstinence seek to attract public attention and respect.

III. 'They must forgo the use of betel leaves.'

These are the leaves of a plant of the convolvulus species, which grows in the maritime districts of India. They have a slightly bitter taste, are mixed with calcined shells or lime, and are eaten with areca-nut and other spices according to taste. The Hindus are perpetually chewing this preparation. To give it up, when one is accustomed to it, would be a greater privation than it would be for any one among us to give up tobacco.

IV. 'Not only must he avoid all female society, but he must not even look at a woman.'

V. 'Once a month his head and face must be shaved.'

To save this trouble many *sannyasis* cause their disciples to pull out the hairs of their head and beard one by one. Some *sannyasis* neither cut their hair nor shave their beards, but plait them up in some ridiculous way. These, however, do not belong to the Brahmin caste.

VI. 'He may only wear wooden sandals on his feet.'

This is a most uncomfortable style of foot-gear ; it is held to the foot by a wooden peg, which comes between the big and second toes. The *sannyasis* use these clogs to avoid defilement, which could not be avoided if they went barefoot, or if they wore leather shoes.

[1] In times of great tribulation the Jews used to cover themselves with sackcloth and ashes in token of their sorrow and deep repentance for their sins. This was the way in which the Ninevites showed their repentance. In France, in several religious houses, it was a duty to lie on ashes when at the point of death. The Council of Benevento in 1091 ordained that the faithful should put ashes on their heads on the first day of Lent to promote a spirit of humiliation and penance during that holy season, by bringing to their recollection the words of Holy Scripture: '*Memento, homo, quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris.*'—DUBOIS.

VII. 'When a *sannyasi* travels, he must carry his seven-knotted staff in one hand, his gourd in the other, and an antelope's skin under his arm.'

Provided with these three articles the *sannyasi* can say, *Omnia mecum porto*. The staff must be exactly his own height. The antelope's skin serves both for a seat and for a bed.

VIII. 'He must live entirely by alms, which he has the right to ask wherever he goes.'

Many collect considerable sums by this means; but they are obliged to spend any surplus in charity or other good works. Some spend it in the erection of rest-houses, pagodas, &c., or in digging wells and constructing reservoirs for water for the use of the public. They also dispense hospitality to persons who pass near their huts, or who come to visit them.

IX. 'Though a *sannyasi* has the right to ask for alms, it is more proper for him to receive them without asking. For instance, if he feel hungry, he should go to some house where people are living, but he must not say anything to them or even hint at his wants. If they give him anything voluntarily, he must take it as if it were of no consequence to him, and without expressing any thanks. If he receives nothing, he must go away without either feeling or showing any annoyance. Neither must he complain if he does not like the taste of what is given him.'

X. 'He must not sit down to eat.'

XI. 'He must build his hut near a river or a tank.'

The reason of this is that he may be able to make frequent ablutions, one of the first duties of a *sannyasi*.

XII. 'When travelling he must make no stay anywhere, and he must only pass through inhabited districts.'

XIII. 'He must regard all men as equals. He must not be influenced by anything that happens, and must be able to view with perfect equanimity even revolutions which overthrow empires.'

XIV. 'His one object in life must be to acquire that measure of wisdom and degree of spirituality which shall finally reunite him to the Supreme Divinity, from whom we are separated by our passions and material surroundings. To achieve this end he must keep his senses under perfect control, and entirely subdue any tendency to anger, envy, avarice, sensuality: in fact,

to any unholy impulses. Otherwise his penance will bear no fruit.'

There are no doubt other general rules which these devotees are bound to follow; but I have only been able to ascertain the above.

Of all the *sannyasis*, those called *Bikshukas* are considered the most perfect of all. They are under no restrictions in regard to food; nothing that they eat or drink, no matter how impure it may be, has power to defile them.

CHAPTER XXXV

A *Sannyasi's* Principal Duties.—Meditation.—Its Various Stages.—What it consists of, and how Hindu Devotees practise it.—General Remarks.—Comparisons between the Hindu *Sannyasis* and those who lead Similar Lives among Christians.

A SANNYASI'S first and most important duty is to destroy, root and branch, any feeling of attachment that may still linger in his heart for the world and its vain pleasures. Wife, children, parents, friends, caste privileges, cattle, lands, jewels and other temporal possessions, animal passions, sensual pleasures—all these are but so many obstacles standing in the way of his soul's perfection. In Hindu books they are likened variously to thick clouds which, until they are dispersed, obscure the light of the sun, or to violent winds that disturb the surface of the water and prevent the reflection of this luminary in all its splendour; to the coils which caterpillars and other insects form, and of which they cannot rid themselves; or again to the kernels of certain fruits in which grubs and maggots are imprisoned.

Such are the similes which Hindu authors make use of when trying to give some idea of the hindrances which earthly passions oppose to spirituality, and which must be overcome before perfection can be attained and the soul reunited to the Divine Being. Nevertheless, these same authors add, the tenements in which caterpillars and grubs confine themselves do not hold them captive for ever. Neither do the insects cease to exist. After remaining for some time in a state of torpor and quiescence, the feeble spark of life which they still retain rekindles and gradually increases in strength till the insects are able to destroy the covering in which they are enclosed, and, by dint of persevering labour, at last open out a passage

to the region of light and liberty. So it is with the soul. The body in which it is imprisoned, and which is a prey to worldly cares and tumultuous passions, will not hold it for ever. After many re-incarnations the spark of perfect wisdom, which is latent in every man, will burn more brightly, until the soul at last succeeds, after a long course of penance and meditation, in breaking asunder, little by little, all the ties which bind it to the world, and will so grow in virtue and strength that it will finally attain that degree of spiritual perfection which will render it fit to be incorporated with the Divinity. Then, leaving the body which has so long held it captive, it will soar upwards and be united for ever with the Supreme Soul from which it originally sprang.

The course which a *sannyasi* should pursue to arrive at this point of perfection differs somewhat according to the sect to which he belongs. His period of emancipation begins from the day on which he entered the holy state of *sannyasi*. By this single act he is supposed to have freed himself from those ties which bind other men to the world and its pleasures. All that he has to do to attain perfection is to make frequent ablutions, to drink *pancha-gavia* constantly, to offer daily sacrifices, and to live a life of asceticism and penance, but above all of meditation, to which he must devote all his leisure time.

This duty of meditation, to which Hindus attach so much importance, appears to me to be so remarkable a practice for idolaters, that I have thought it incumbent on me to call special attention to it. The details that I am about to relate will show to what extremes superstition and fanaticism will pervert men's minds, especially when they are connected with self-conceit and a longing for notoriety.

The doctrine of meditation is called *yogam*, and from it the word *yogi* is derived, which is the name usually given to a tribe of vagabonds who are erroneously supposed to devote themselves entirely to this practice[1].

According to the Hindu doctrine the practice of *yogam* has a peculiarly spiritualizing and purifying effect on a *sannyasi*, for he thereby passes through four different stages, each one more perfect than the last.

The first is called *salokyam*, or unity of place. In this state

[1] This is too sweeping an assertion. All *yogis* are not vagabonds.—Ed.

the soul inhabits, as it were, the same place as the Divinity; it is as though it were in the presence of God. After practising for a long time the duties of *salokyam*, the soul passes on to the second stage, called *samipyam* (proximity). In this stage, by practising meditation and keeping all earthly objects out of the mental pale, the knowledge and perception of God become more and more acute, and the soul seems to be drawn nearer and nearer to Him.

After having spent many generations in this stage, the soul passes on to the third, the *sarupyam* (resemblance). Once arrived at this point, the soul gradually acquires a perfect resemblance to the Divinity, and shares to a certain extent in His attributes. Finally, this stage leads on to the fourth, the *sayujyam* (identity), and then the perfect and inseparable union of the soul with the Deity becomes complete.

But the soul requires long periods of time to pass through these four stages of perfection; it must undergo a great number of re-incarnations, during which it gradually acquires the degree of perfection which is essential to its incorporation with the Godhead. In order to explain all these indispensable transmigrations of the soul, the Hindu books make use of various analogies, such as the following:—If one wished to extract gold from a mass composed of the five metals[1], one could not do so by melting it once for all. Only by putting it through the fire several times could one separate the different alloys of which it was composed and extract the gold in all its purity.

They illustrate the same truth by various other similes; for instance, that which may be drawn from the process of making clarified butter, an article of food which, as we already know, the Brahmins are particularly fond of, and which they consider the purest of all manufactured substances.

The majority of these analogies, and the principles deduced from them, might, if looked at from a non-controversial point of view, be not altogether repugnant to our learned metaphysicians, or at any rate to those among us who have given themselves up to a life of meditation. We may at any rate conclude that these ancient Hindu penitents spent more time and thought on spiritual matters than we might have expected. Originally, no doubt, this spiritual side of their religion was much purer and

[1] We Europeans recognize a greater number of metals than five.—DUBOIS.

less fanciful than it is now, when it has become corrupted by gross idolatry. Now it merely tends to increase the pride of the recluses who practise it. The latter indeed set up a claim to unity and equality with the Supreme Being himself; while they look down upon their fellow-creatures as objects of supreme contempt, as beings who are still wallowing in the mire of materialism and passion.

And how did these so-called penitents carry out their doctrine of meditation, concerning which they made such proud boasting? Before idolatry had gained a hold on the country, and while the tradition of the outward forms as well as of the inward meaning of the religion with which men worshipped the Deity after the Flood still lingered, this doctrine of meditation, prompted as it was by lofty motives, was doubtless capable of maintaining the soul in a constant state of fervent piety towards God; but at the present time this religious exercise is undertaken with an object very different and much less estimable.

I cannot better explain wherein this practice of meditation consists for a modern *sannyasi* than by repeating what I was told by two Hindus who had passed a long novitiate under the direction of two celebrated recluses.

'I was a novice for four months,' said one of them, 'under a *sannyasi* who had built himself a hermitage in a lonely spot not very far from the town of Bellapuram. Following his instructions, I spent the greater part of each night awake, occupied in keeping my mind an absolute blank and thinking of nothing. I made superhuman efforts to hold my breath as long as possible, and only breathed when I was on the point of fainting. This suffocating exercise made me perspire profusely. One day, at high noon, I thought I saw a bright moon, which seemed to move and sway from side to side. Another time I imagined myself enveloped in thick darkness at midday. My director, the *sannyasi*, who had warned me that while going through this course of penance I should see many marvels, was greatly pleased when I mentioned these visions to him. He congratulated me on the progress that I was making, and prescribed fresh exercises which were even more severe than the first. The time was not far distant, he assured me, when I should experience much more surprising results from my penance. At last, worn out by these foolish and fatiguing practices, and

fearing lest my brain might really be turned, I left the *sannyasi* and his meditative penances, and returned to my former state of life.'

The second, an old man of a very cheerful disposition, told me the following story of his novitiate:—

'The *sannyasi* under whose direction I placed myself had built his hermitage at some distance from the fort of Namakal, in a desert spot. Amongst other exercises which he laid down for me, he obliged me to stare at the sky every day without blinking my eyes or changing my position. This prolonged effort inflamed my eyes terribly and often gave me dreadful headaches. Sometimes I thought I saw sparks of fire in the air; at others I seemed to see fiery globes and other meteors. My teacher was much pleased with the success of my efforts and with the progress I was making. He had only one eye, and I knew that he had lost the other in following out this practice, which he assured me was indispensable if I wished to attain to perfect spirituality. But at last I could bear it no longer, and fearing that I might lose the sight of both eyes, I bade farewell to meditation and the celestial firmament. I also tried another kind of exercise for a time. My master told me that an infallible means for making rapid progress towards spirituality was to keep all the apertures of my body completely closed, so that none of the five *pranams* (winds) which are in it could escape. To do this I had to place a thumb in each ear, close my lips with the fourth and little fingers of each hand, my eyes with the two forefingers, and my nostrils with the two middle fingers; and to close the lower orifice I had to cross my legs and sit very tightly on one of my heels. While in this attitude I had to keep one nostril tightly shut, and leaving the other open I had to draw in a long deep breath; then, immediately closing that nostril, I had to open the other and thoroughly exhale the air that I had just inhaled. It was of the greatest importance that the inhalation and exhalation should not be performed through the same nostril. I continued this exercise until I lost consciousness and fainted away.'

In order to make his description more intelligible the renegade *sannyasi* insisted on going through the performance in my presence. It is impossible to imagine a more ridiculous scene. But he took care to change his exhausting position as

soon as possible, bursting into shouts of laughter at the recollection of the absurd things that he had been compelled to do.

I will now give some other examples of meditative exercises gathered from Hindu books, which will show how they were practised in former days. One of the most famous and edifying of the *yogams* is that called *sabda-brahma* (the word of Brahma) or *pranava*; that is to say, meditation on the sacred and mysterious word *aum*—*aum* being Brahma himself[1].

As this word *aum* is composed of three letters, which in writing form only one, we may consider that the *a* is Brahma, the *u* Vishnu, and the *m* Siva. The sign representing these three letters, which in combination form the *sabda-brahma*, ends with a semicircle with a dot in the centre, which is called *bindu*, and is the emblem of the purely spiritual being.

Those who desire to obtain salvation must be always meditating on this word and constantly repeating it.

But to make this meditation effectual one must begin by obtaining complete mastery over oneself and by entirely subduing all bodily senses and passions. One must, therefore, gradually withdraw one's thoughts and affections from all material objects and fix them on the dot, or *bindu*, mentioned above. This point once reached, a single moment of meditation is sufficient to ensure the most perfect happiness.

Vishnu always looks favourably on such meditations, and from the moment that one is able to bring oneself to believe firmly that the *pranava*, or the word *aum*, is the Divine Being, one sees Vishnu in everything. In fact, one sees, hears, and thinks of nothing but him; and, finally, one believes that there is nothing existing except him.

Just as there is nothing worth knowing that is not to be found in the Vedas, so no meditation is equal in merit to that of the *pranava*, or the word *aum*.

Another kind of meditation, which is quite as efficacious as that which I have just described, is the *ashta-yoga* (the eight *yogas*). The following is a short analysis of it, compiled from the *Saka* of the Rig-Veda:—

The *ashta-yoga* is peculiarly efficacious. By its means Siva himself obtained forgiveness for his sins[2] and the kingdom of

[1] It would be more correct to say Brahman—the Supreme Spirit itself.—Ed.

[2] See Part I, Chapter VII.

Kailasa. There are no sins that it will not wipe out! To kill a Brahmin or a cow, to steal gold, to drink intoxicating liquors, to violate the wife of one's *guru*, to bring about abortion, are all most heinous crimes. To slander or deceive a Brahmin, or break a promise made to a Brahmin; to look upon a poor man or a stranger when one is eating and not to have pity on him, but to repulse him and send him away hungry; to prevent cows from drinking when they are thirsty; to try to pass oneself off as learned when one knows nothing; to attempt to dogmatize on the practice of meditation while ignorant of the subject; to give medicines without being a doctor; to predict the future when one is no astrologer; for a Brahmin to offer sacrifices to the *lingam* or to an image of Vishnu after a Sudra has previously sacrificed to them:—all these are indeed terrible sins. But the *ashta-yoga* will wipe them all out. It is thus described:—First of all, one must fast for three consecutive days; after which one must repair to a temple dedicated to Siva, or to a cemetery, or to a *bilva* tree. There one must perform the *achamania* and paint the little circular mark called *tilaka* on one's forehead. Having prepared a clean spot on the ground, the devotee must stand upon it on his head with his feet in the air. In this position he must six times perform the *pranayama*, which consists in inhaling through one nostril and forcibly expelling the air through the other[1]. By this means the Man of Sin will be destroyed, for this Man of Sin resides in the nerve which is found on the left side of the head. While expelling the air from the body by the *pranayama*, one must say: 'Nerve, you are a goddess! In you resides the Man of Sin. I am about to wash you to rid you of him. So begone!' A violent exhalation through the left nostril having expelled this nerve where the Man of Sin dwelt, the devotee must then wash it in warm water and offer *puja* to it. Then it must be made to return to its proper place. To effect this a long inhalation must be made through the right nostril, accompanied by the following words:—'Behold, great goddess, freed from sin, you are the mother of the world! A sacrifice has been offered in your honour. Return now to the place that you occupied before.'

This is the exercise of the *ashta-yoga*. It was by practising

[1] *Pranayama* literally means suppression of breath.—ED.

this, the author asserts, that Siva became the ruler of the world; Indra, the lord of the *Swarga*; Durga, the mother of all living creatures; and Vishnu, the preserver of all things.

There are many other *yogams*. In the chapter on the *sandhya*, I gave a description of the *santi-yoga*, which serves as a kind of preparation to the Brahmin's daily sacrifice. But enough has perhaps been said to show how puerile are the religious exercises of the Hindu ascetics.

They have, by way of supererogation, eighteen kinds of *tapasas* or corporal penances, of increasing degrees of severity. A recluse selects the one for which he feels most inclination. Among the most painful may be mentioned that which consists in being exposed, stark naked, to the sun for the whole day in the hottest weather, and surrounded on all sides by huge fires; and that in which the devotee remains for a whole day immersed up to the neck in cold water, with a wet cloth round the head, during the coldest season of the year. These are called *pancha-tapasas* (the five penances).

One often sees devotees holding their arms folded above their heads, in which position they remain till the nerves become so strained and benumbed by the prolonged tension that they cannot regain their normal position.

Others, again, stand on one foot, holding the other foot in the air until the leg swells and inflames and breaks out all over into sores.

Hindu books are full of the merits of these *yogams* and *tapasas*. Amongst other self-inflicted tortures they give an honourable place to one which is in fact the *ne plus ultra* of its kind. It consists in holding the breath for such a length of time that the soul, forced to depart from the body, makes a passage for itself through the top of the head and flies off to reunite itself to Parabrahma.

But let no one carry away the idea that the majority of modern recluses feel any inclination to subject their bodies to such rough usage. Most of them rest content with sitting motionless, their eyes closed and their heads bent, spending their whole time and energy in thinking of nothing, and keeping their minds an utter blank. Others remain squatting imperturbably in the attitude which the minister Appaji recommended to his shepherd, as already described[1].

[1] See Part II, Chapter XXVII.

One of these meditative devotees, who lived near me, had a mania for imagining that he saw an image of Vishnu always before him, to which he offered, still in imagination, garments, jewels, and all sorts of food, the god in exchange giving him all that he asked for. He used to spend two hours every day in this occupation, but at the end of it all he invariably found himself, as before, with empty hands and an equally empty stomach.

No doubt there were men after the Flood who still retained the precious gift of a knowledge of the true God, and gave themselves up to the contemplation of His infinite perfections as a means of keeping alive in their hearts a proper sense of the worship that it was their duty to pay Him. Isaac most probably was only continuing the custom of his father Abraham in going out, at the close of the day, to meditate in the fields (Genesis xxiv. 63). Moses also commanded the children of Israel to meditate continually on the duty of loving God with all their hearts; and he enjoined them to meditate on this when in their houses, or when travelling, so that God might be always present to their minds. David, who had himself experienced the benefit of meditation, recommends the practice in almost all his Psalms; and this advice his son Solomon repeats. The pious habit has thus descended from generation to generation from the time of the Flood to the establishment of Christianity, and the religion of Christ likewise regards meditation on the precepts of God as an indispensable duty.

The first Hindu lawgivers, who, though separating themselves from the rest of mankind, preserved their knowledge of the true God, were fully impressed with the necessity of frequent meditation on His greatness, fearing that otherwise they might insensibly allow the recollection of the Deity to fade from their minds; but these just ideas were soon warped by human passions and corrupted by the spirit of idolatry, so that they quickly degenerated into ridiculous and meaningless practices. The pious men who in early ages gave up a few moments in each day to serious thought and meditation were succeeded by fanatics, who, retaining only the mere outward forms of their predecessors' inward piety, gave themselves up in their mad enthusiasm to the wildest extravagance, and in fact to any folly that they thought likely

to attract the fancy of a people so devoted to exaggerations of all kinds as the Hindus. Modern authors, confusing religious practices which originate in sincere love for and devotion to God with those emanating from vainglory, hypocrisy, and superstition, have tried to throw discredit on the life of asceticism and contemplation which was advocated both by the old and the new dispensation, and have presumed to trace a similarity between it and the absurd *yogams* of the Hindu *sannyasis*. But it seems to me that a small amount of honest thought would have shown them what an immense difference there was both in the objects aimed at and in the means used to attain those objects. Let them compare the tenets and practices of the two great founders of the ascetic and contemplative life in Holy Writ with those of the so-called *sannyasi* philosophers amongst the Hindus. Can Elijah and John the Baptist be compared for one moment with the *sannyasis* Vasishta and Narada? Is there any sort of resemblance between the teachings and maxims of the former and of the latter? The *Padma-purana* and the *Vishnu-purana*, supposed to have been dictated by these two *sannyasis*, are a mass of exaggerations and absurdities. Could the same charge be brought against the doctrines of the holy prophet of Israel and those of the forerunner of the Messiah?

The penances of John the Baptist, for example, have certainly nothing in common with the exaggerations and hypocritical follies of the Hindu *sannyasis*, whose sole aim and object is to attract public attention to themselves[1]. The actuating motive of John the Baptist was the deepest humility. He hid himself from the world. He shunned, despised, and rejected its honours, and wished to be considered the least and humblest among men. Nevertheless, in his solitude he did not forget the duties laid upon him of instructing and preparing the world for the great event which was about to be accomplished. Attracted by the fame of his virtues, men of all ages and all classes flocked to hear the pure and holy doctrine which he taught. Labourers, soldiers, publicans, masters, servants—all desired to hear his preaching, and all received wise advice and counsel for the regulation of their conduct according to their various conditions.

[1] This can hardly be called an impartial and correct picture of the *sannyasi*.—ED.

If he left his desert home for a moment, it was only, like his predecessor Elijah, to extend yet further the word of God and to reprove with dauntless courage the criminal conduct of an incestuous king.

It was not by such unmeaning and ridiculous practices as the *moksha-sadhaka*, the *pranava*, the *santi-yoga*, the *homam*, the *pancha-gavia*, or the disgusting sacrifices to the *lingam*, that these saintly hermits and their disciples sought to arrive at perfection. They never aimed at gaining popular applause by excessive and unnatural penances. Their actions, on the contrary, were based on profound humility and on a sincere desire to live unhonoured by the world, with only their God as a witness to the purity of their lives and motives.

CHAPTER XXXVI

The Funeral Ceremonies of Brahmin *Sannyasis*.

THE ceremonies which accompany the funerals of *sannyasis* differ in many respects from those of ordinary Brahmins. *Vanaprasthas*, like ordinary Brahmins, are burned after death; but *sannyasis* are invariably buried, no matter what their rank or sect may be.

The son of a *sannyasi* (should the deceased have had one born to him before he embraced this state) must preside at the funeral. In default of a son, there is always some pious Brahmin who will take on himself the duty and bear the cost. There is often, indeed, much rivalry as to who shall have the honour of filling this office, as it is considered a most meritorious one. After the corpse has been washed in the usual manner, it is wrapped in two cloths dyed yellow with *kavi*. It is then rubbed all over with ashes, and a chaplet of large seeds called *rudrakshas*[1] is fastened round the neck. While all this is going on the other Brahmins play on bronze castanets, which make an ear-splitting noise.

Everything being in readiness for the obsequies, the body is placed, with its legs crossed, in a large bamboo basket, which is hung from a strong bamboo pole by ropes of straw. This basket is borne by four Brahmins. The grave must be dug near a river or a tank, and must be about six feet deep and circular in form. When they reach the spot the Brahmins deposit at the bottom of the grave a thick layer of salt, on which they place the deceased, with the legs still crossed. They then fill the hole with salt till it reaches the *sannyasi's* neck, pressing it well down so that the head may remain immovable. On the head, thus left exposed, they break innumerable cocoanuts until the

[1] This word *rudraksha* means the eye of Siva, because these seeds are, according to Hindu legend, formed by his tears.—DUBOIS.

skull is completely fractured[1]. They then, for the third time, throw in salt in sufficient quantities to entirely cover the remains of the head. Over the grave they erect a kind of platform, or mound, three feet in height, on the top of which they place a *lingam* of earth about two feet high. This obscene object is immediately consecrated by the Brahmins, who offer to it a sacrifice of lighted lamps, flowers, and incense, and for *neiveddya*, bananas and *paramannam*, a dish to which the Brahmins are particularly partial, and which is composed of rice, cocoanut, and sugar. While these offerings are being made, hymns are sung in honour of Vishnu, all present screaming at the top of their voices.

This discordant music over, the presiding Brahmin walks round the *lingam* three times, makes a profound obeisance to it, expresses the hope that by virtue of the sacrifice offered to the image the deceased may be fully satisfied, that Siva may look favourably on him, that Brahma may receive him into his abode, and that thus he may escape another re-incarnation in this world. He then pours a little rice and a few drops of water on the ground, picks up all the fragments of the cocoanut shells that have been broken on the head of the deceased, and distributes them to those present, who scramble for the pieces, so eager are they to possess these relics, which are supposed to bring good luck. The *paramannam* is then divided among those who have no children, for when acquired under these circumstances it possesses the power of making barren women fruitful. The ceremonies of the day end with ablutions: not that the mourners need to purify themselves from any defilement, because none is contracted in attending the funeral of a *sannyasi*; but these ablutions serve instead of the bath which all Brahmins must take three times a day.

For ten successive days after the funeral the person who has presided thereat, and several other Brahmins in his company, meet every morning at the grave of the deceased to renew the offerings to the *lingam*. A similar ceremony takes place on the anniversary of his death.

On the conclusion of the ceremonies, the presiding Brahmin contents himself with giving a very frugal repast to all those

[1] The object of this is to free the *prana* (life), which is believed to be imprisoned in the skull.—ED.

who have attended the function, after which he walks thrice round the assembly, bows to them, and dismisses them without giving them any presents. They, in their turn, before their departure, congratulate him on the good deed that he has performed and on the reward that he has earned thereby.

The tombs of these *sannyasis* sometimes become famous, and crowds of devotees flock to them, bringing offerings and sacrifices as if to divine beings. The strange custom of breaking the heads of these dead hermits with cocoanuts at their burial has no doubt some connexion with the similar practice in regard to the *lingam* stones which may often be seen on the high-roads or in much-frequented places, the passers-by being in the habit of breaking on the top of these *lingams* the cocoanuts which they are about to offer as sacrifices.

All the prayers, oblations, and ceremonies which are offered up for the *sannyasis* after their death would seem to indicate an opinion that these hermits still have some sins to expiate, and that their perfect happiness remains doubtful[1]. This is not the only point on which Hindu beliefs contradict each other.

I have already said that it is a mistake to confuse Brahmin *sannyasis* with those Sudra penitents belonging to the sects of Siva and Vishnu, who live apart in solitary hermitages. These latter are not obliged to fulfil the condition of having previously been fathers of families. They are supposed to have always been absolutely continent, but I should be very sorry to be compelled to guarantee the fact.

A Brahmin can become a *sannyasi* at any age. Many are to be met with who, tormented by remorseful consciences, devote the last days of their lives to this profession, and even embrace it on their death-beds, convinced as they are that to have merely become a penitent is a sure safe-conduct to the other world. The same formalities as those which I have already described are used for the admission of these hoary old sinners to a tardy penitence; and be their repentance sincere or not, they can safely count on receiving after death all the advantages and all the happiness that the most persevering *sannyasis* have a right to expect who have grown old in the exercise of the most rigorous austerities.

[1] These ceremonies would appear to be observed more as a matter of ritual than of expiation.—ED.

PART III

RELIGION

CHAPTER I

Origin of the *Trimurti* and the Primitive Idolatry of the Hindus.—Comparison between the Greek and Indian Divinities.—Peculiar Idolatry of the Hindus.—Worship of the Elements represented by the *Trimurti*.

THE Hindus understand by the word *Trimurti* the three principal divinities whom they acknowledge. These are Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. The word properly signifies '*the three powers*,' viz. *Creation*, the special attribute of Brahma; *Preservation*, the attribute of Vishnu; and *Destruction*, the attribute of Siva[1].

These three divinities are represented sometimes singly with their special emblems, and sometimes joined together in a single body with three heads. It is under the latter form that they obtain the name of *Trimurti*, which means, at once, both *the three bodies* and *the three powers*. This union of persons is the allegorical symbol of the existence of things created, which can neither be produced nor preserved without the agreement and the sanction of these three powers.

[1] The first is the religion of activity and works; the second, that of faith and love; the third, that of austerity, contemplation, and spiritual knowledge. This last is regarded as the highest, because it aims at entire cessation of action and total effacement of all personal entity and identity by absorption into simple Soul.—MONIER-WILLIAMS.

The *Trimurti* is recognized and worshipped generally by all Hindus except the Jains. Although many Hindus are specially devoted, some to Siva and others to Vishnu, nevertheless when these two divinities are united with Brahma in a single body with three heads they all pay equal worship to the three without regard to the particular points of doctrine which otherwise separate them.

It is very difficult to trace the origin of the *Trimurti*, inasmuch as the accounts of it do not agree. In some Puranas it is related that the *Trimurti* sprang from a female source called *Adi-Sakti* (the original power), who gave birth to these three divinities united in a single body; and it is added that after having brought them into the world she fell so desperately in love with them that she married them.

In some other Puranas we read that *Adi-Sakti* produced a seed from which was born Siva, the father of Vishnu.

Elsewhere we are told that a flower of the *tamarasa* plant (water-lily) sprang from the navel of Vishnu, and that from this flower Brahma was born.

In short, we find in the Hindu books a mere tissue of contradictions relating to the *Trimurti*, and the absurd details which are related in connexion with each are even more inconsistent. The point on which they agree to a certain extent is that which relates to the excesses and abominable amours of the three divinities composing it.

In spite of the great power which these divinities enjoyed, they were nevertheless often compelled to feel the terrible vengeance of virtuous persons, who, shocked at the sight of their infamous proceedings, found means of reducing them to subjection and inflicting on them severe punishment. Thus, for example, there was a certain virgin, named Anusooya, who was as much renowned for her inviolable chastity as for her devotion to the gods and for her tender compassion for the unfortunate. The divinities of the *Trimurti*, having heard of her, became so greatly enamoured that they resolved upon robbing her of her virginity, which she had till then treasured with so much care. To attain their object the three seducers disguised themselves as religious mendicants, and under this guise went to ask alms of her. The virgin came to them, and with her wonted kindness showered gifts upon them. The sham beggars, after being

loaded with her gifts, told her that they expected from her another favour, which was to strip herself naked before them and to satisfy their impure desires. Surprised and frightened by this shameful proposal, she repulsed them by pronouncing against them certain *mantrams*. These, together with some holy water which she poured upon them, had the effect of converting them into a calf. After they had been thus transformed, Anusooya took upon herself to bring up this calf by feeding it with her own milk. The *Trimurti* remained in this humiliating position till all the female deities combined together and, fearing lest some great misfortune might befall them in the absence of their three principal gods, after consulting one another, went in a body to Anusooya and begged her most humbly to give up the *Trimurti* and to restore them to their former state. It was with great difficulty that Anusooya was persuaded to yield to their prayers, and even then she imposed a condition that they should first of all be ravished (by whom the fable does not say). The female deities, convinced that they could not otherwise rescue the *Trimurti*, consented to undergo the penalty required of them, choosing rather to lose their honour than their gods. The conditions being fulfilled, Anusooya restored the *Trimurti* to their former state, and they returned to the place whence they came[1].

This scandalous adventure of the mighty divinities of the *Trimurti* is one of the least indecent of the kind related in the Hindu books.

But whatever may be the confusion pervading the contradictory accounts of the different Puranas, I am inclined to believe that all that is said about the three divinities of the *Trimurti*, and of the follies which are ascribed to them, is a mere mass of disgusting allegory.

At the commencement of their idolatry the Hindus confined their worship to visible objects, such as the sun, the moon, the stars, and the elements. In those early times they felt no need of making idols of stone, wood, or metal. But as paganism extended its dominion, and when, in imitation of other idolatrous nations, the Hindus went so far as to deify simple mortals, they had

[1] Hindus would say that these stories were not intended to illustrate the immorality of their gods, but to affirm that a chaste woman is proof even against divine temptation.—ED.

recourse to statues and images in order to perpetuate the memory of their celebrated men and to transmit their virtues to posterity. By degrees, with the same object in view, they gave a bodily form to all the objects of their worship. The origin of the *Trimurti* dates, I believe, from a period long after the establishment of idolatry in India.

It may justly be presumed that this symbolic representation of the three divinities united in a single body denotes merely the three elements which are most perceptible to all, viz. earth, water, and fire. In course of time the original notion vanished, and an ignorant people, guided solely by the impression of the senses, gradually converted what was at first a simple allegory into three distinct and real divinities.

Before pushing my inquiries further upon this subject, I would make a few remarks on the origin which many modern writers have assigned to this triple divinity of India. They have asserted that these three gods are nothing else but the three principal deities of the Greeks and the Romans under different names. Brahma, according to them, is Jupiter, Vishnu is Neptune, and Siva is Pluto. In fact, according to the mythology of the Greeks, Jupiter is the author and the creator of all things; he is the father, the master, and the king of gods and men. Now, all these attributes belong equally to Brahma. The Hindus say that the universe is *the egg of Brahma,* and that after laying it, he hatched it. He also particularly resembles Jupiter in his incestuous alliances. Jupiter had for his wife Juno, his sister; Brahma is, at the same time, the father and the husband of Sarasvati: and it would be easy to enumerate many more points of resemblance between these two divinities.

The resemblance between Neptune and Vishnu is no less striking. Neptune makes the waters his abode; the sea is his empire; there he reigns, mounted on his chariot in the form of a shell drawn by sea-horses, and armed with his formidable trident. He is attended by Tritons, who make the whole sea re-echo with the sound of their conches. One of the most common names for Vishnu is *Narayana*, which signifies *one that sojourns in the waters.* He is represented as quietly sleeping on the surface of the ocean. It is true he has neither trident in his hand nor Tritons around him; but his devotees bear on their

forehead a symbolic figure which closely resembles a trident, and in imitation of the companions of Neptune they are always provided with a conch, or *sangu*, from which they blow ear-splitting blasts, and the figure of which is also stamped on their shoulders with hot iron.

Siva, again, is a perfect prototype of Pluto, the gloomy god of hell, the lord of the shades and of night. To Siva belongs the power of destruction. He it is who reduces everything to dust; he takes delight in giving vent to his sobs and groans in places of burial, whence he derives the name of *Rudra* commonly given him. It signifies *one who causes lamentation.*

Pluto, unable to find a woman willing to dwell with him in his dismal abode, carried off Proserpine, and concealed her so well that for a long while she escaped the search of her mother Ceres. In like manner, Siva found a wife in a remote quarter. Unable to get one elsewhere, he obtained one at last from the mountain Mandra, who gave him in marriage his daughter Parvati, in consideration of a long and severe penance which Siva endured for her sake in the deserts. For fear lest she should escape from him, he carries her always on his head, concealed in his enormously thick hair[1].

But though some features of resemblance lead us to believe in the identity of the fabulous deities of India with those of Greece and Rome, we find ourselves disconcerted at every step. As a matter of fact both Vishnu and Siva, as well as Brahma, possess many traits of likeness to the Olympian king. It was Vishnu who cleared the earth of a multitude of giants that over-ran it—giants who far exceeded in stature Enceladus, Briareus, and the other Titans who were destroyed by Jupiter. Jupiter is borne by an eagle; Vishnu likewise rides a pretty eagle called *Garuda*, which, though the smallest of the birds of its own species, became enormously large when it carried the god under the designation of *Jagannatha*, i. e. Master of the World, an attribute which he shares with the most powerful of the sons of Saturn.

Juno is the goddess of wealth. The name of Lakshmi, the

[1] The Abbé is evidently confusing Parvati with Ganga (the Ganges), who according to Hindu mythology is always carried on Siva's head. Parvati is always said to be carried on Siva's left hip.—ED.

wife of Vishnu, also signifies *one who gives riches.* Jealous like Juno, Lakshmi had a good deal to suffer, as well as her prototype, on account of the numberless infidelities of her husband, the consequences of which were the same, namely, perpetual domestic quarrels. The Romans, in the feasts which they celebrated in honour of their gods, always represented Jupiter in company with his wife; and the Hindus do the same in the case of Vishnu and Lakshmi.

There are other divinities, such as *Devendra, Varuna,* and *Yama,* who display still greater resemblances to the three most powerful deities of Greek mythology. Devendra, whose name is equivalent to that of *master of the deities,* is the 'monarch of the sky.' He exercises his sovereignty over the deities of the second rank, who inhabit with him a place called *Swarga,* where they enjoy all kinds of carnal pleasures. He distributes among them the *amrita,* which has the virtue of rendering them immortal[1]. Like Jupiter, he is armed with lightning and launches it against the giants.

Varuna is really the Hindu Neptune. He is the god of water, the lord of the ocean, and is worshipped as such over the whole Peninsula.

We recognize Pluto in Yama. Yama exercises his sovereignty in *Naraka* (hell), as Pluto does in Tartarus. He presides at men's death-beds, and determines their subsequent destiny according to the deeds, good or bad, which they have done during their lifetime. I might prolong this comparison, without however drawing the conclusion that the Hindus ever borrowed their system of theogony from the Greeks, or the Greeks from the Hindus.

But if it is not from other ancient peoples that the Hindus derived their three principal divinities, whence have they derived them? I shall attempt some reflections on this point with all the reserve imposed upon me by a subject so difficult of explanation. Let us first observe that Hindu idolatry differs in one essential point from that which prevailed formerly in Athens and in Rome. In Greece and Rome it was not the sea that was worshipped, but its monarch, the god Neptune. All his attendants, the Nereids and the Tritons, had a share in the

[1] *Mrita* signifies death, and *amrita* immortality. The *amrita* does not appear to differ from the ambrosia of the Greeks.—DUBOIS.

worship offered to him. It was not to the forests, to the rivers, or to the fountains that prayers were offered, but to the Fauns and to the Naiads who presided over them.

The idolatry of India, which is of a much grosser kind, has for the object of its worship the material substance itself. It is to water, to fire, to the most common household implements; in a word, to everything which they understand to be useful or hurtful, that the Hindus pay direct worship.

It is true that they admit another kind of idolatry which is a little more refined. There are images of deities of the first rank which are exposed to public veneration only after a Brahmin has invoked and incorporated in them these actual divinities. In these cases, it is really the divinity that resides in the idol, and not the idol itself, that is worshipped.

But the one kind of worship does not exclude the other; and that which has for its object the actual substance itself is the most common.

The Hindus hold, as an invariable principle, that every object, animate or inanimate, which has the power of doing good or evil, should be worshipped.

'My god,' a respectable Hindu said to me one day, 'is the headman amongst my field labourers; for as they work under his orders, he can, by using his influence, do me much good or much evil.'

I have somewhere read a conversation between the wives of the seven famous *Rishis*, in which they agreed in the principle that the chief god of a woman is her husband, by reason of the good or evil he can do her; and we have already seen that the rules of conduct drawn up for Hindu ladies continually remind us of this idea. It is this same notion which makes the Hindus attach so much importance to the blessing or the curse of persons reputed to be saints; it is on the same principle also that they are so easily persuaded to give the name of god to princes and great personages, and, in short, to every one from whom they have something to hope or to fear.

There is one phrase which among the civilized nations of Europe has at all times been a metaphorical exaggeration, but which is taken literally in India. *To make a god of one's belly* bears quite a different meaning for a Brahmin and for a European.

The rage for deifying everything has spread even to the mountains and to the forests. The savage tribes who inhabit these places do not worship any of the gods of the country; they have one special deity of their own: it is a big root, a sort of potato, which grows abundantly in the forests, and forms their principal staple of food. Knowing nothing more useful than this vegetable, they make it the object of their worship. In its presence they celebrate their marriages, and in its name they take their oaths.

Probably the *Trimurti* owed its origin to this mode of viewing objects. Earth, water, and fire were the types of the three divinities which compose it. The earth is the common mother of all things, animate and inanimate. Either they spring from her bosom, or they live upon her productions. It is through her that everything subsists in nature. She has, therefore, been regarded as the divine creator, and holds the first rank in the opinion of the Hindus, who have made her their Brahma.

But what could the earth do without the help of water? Without the dews and the rains which develop the seeds of her fertility she would remain barren, and would soon find herself bereft of every living creature. It is water which gives life, preserves, and causes to grow everything that has life or vegetates. It was, therefore, regarded as the divine preserver, that is to say, Vishnu.

Fire, in penetrating the other two elements, communicates to them a portion of its energy, develops their properties, and brings everything in nature to that state of growth, maturity, and perfection which would never be arrived at without it. But, should it cease to act upon created things, every one of them perishes. When it is in its free and visible state, this active agent of reproduction destroys by its irresistible power the bodies to whose composition it had before contributed; and it is to this formidable power that it owed its title of god-destroyer, that is to say, Siva.

By uniting the three elements in a single body with three heads the founders of the Hindu theogony wished it to be understood that the harmony of these three primal elements was indispensable to the production and reproduction of all secondary bodies.

This is not a theory of my own invented merely for the purpose of explaining the original idolatry of the Hindus; it is their own peculiar doctrine, observed by them in daily practice. It is even one of the fundamental tenets of the religion of the Brahmins. To convince themselves of this, let my readers reperuse the chapter about *sandhya*, which so formally enjoins the special and direct worship of the three elements, while the two others, air and ether, are almost forgotten.

The Brahmins offer worship and address mystical prayers to the seven inferior worlds, of which the first and the most important is the earth. 'Glory to thee, O earth, mother most great,' are the words of the *Yajur-Veda*; and immediately after is added, 'Glory to thee, O fire, who art god.'

There is no surer proof that they attach to fire itself the idea of divine essence than their perpetual sacrifices of *homam* and of *yagnam*, in which no other object of worship than this element is observable.

The divinity of water is also incontestably recognized as an article of their belief. The Brahmins worship it and offer prayers to it when they make their daily ablutions. It is then that they invoke the holy rivers, among others the Ganges, and all its sacred branches. Often too they offer oblations to water by casting into the rivers and tanks, especially at the places where they bathe, small pieces of gold and silver, and sometimes pearls and other valuable jewels.

Furthermore, sailors, fishermen, and all who frequent the sea, visit the shore from time to time to pay their worship and to offer up their sacrifices to it.

When, after a long drought, an abundant rain brings hope to the despairing husbandman by filling the great reservoirs for the irrigation of the rice-fields, the inhabitants at once flock to them and with signs of joy exclaim, 'The lady is arrived'; and they bow with their hands clasped towards the water which fills the reservoirs, while he-goats or rams are sacrificed in its honour.

At the season of the year when the Cauvery inundates the barren and scorched fields on its banks and spreads freshness and fertility far and wide—which generally takes place in the middle of July—the inhabitants of that part of the Peninsula crowd to its banks, many of them coming from a great distance,

in order to congratulate *the lady* (the water) on her arrival and to offer her sacrifices of all sorts, such as pieces of money, which they throw to her that she may have something to defray her expenses; pieces of linen to clothe herself; jewels to adorn herself; rice, cakes, fruits, and other eatables, lest she should suffer from hunger; household utensils such as baskets, earthen vessels, &c., in order that she may conveniently cook and store her provisions and have everything which may procure her an easy subsistence.

The homage which the Brahmins in the *sandhya* ceremonies pay to the water contained in the copper vessel, the frequent performance of *achamania*[1] or purification by water, and many other similar acts, attest the reality of the special worship which they pay to water. Hence no doubt arises the great veneration which they have for Vishnu, who represents this element in the *Trimurti*; a veneration far superior to that which they show to Siva, the representative of fire.

As far as one can see, in ancient times the elements had temples specially dedicated to their worship; but I confess that I have not been able to discover any vestiges of such buildings still remaining. Nevertheless, if we may believe the evidence of a Brahmin who was consulted on the subject by Abraham Rogers, there was, when this traveller visited India, in a district not far from the Coromandel Coast, a temple dedicated to *the five elements*. Be this as it may, however, one may not unfrequently see upon the door or in the interior of the temples existing at the present day the symbols of these elements represented either by five *lingams* arranged in a line, or by only three which are symbols of the material *Trimurti*—earth, water, and fire.

It may be remarked, perhaps, that the Hindus are not the only ancient nation which has adored the elements without attaching to the worship the idea of the divinities who subsequently became identified with it. Most idolatrous nations have, I am quite aware, made the elements the actual objects of their worship. But this confirms rather than contradicts the opinion that the Hindus gave themselves up to this absurd material idolatry, and that they invented their *Trimurti* in order to perpetuate it by symbols. For I persist in my belief that the

[1] Described in the chapter on *sandhya*.

three great divinities, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, were originally nothing else but the three elements personified.

The *Trimurti*, as we have seen, signifies at the same time the *three bodies* and the *three powers.* These three bodies, symbolical of the three great agents of Nature, were at first simply allegorical, just as are most of the religious and political institutions of India. This decided taste for allegory, which is characteristic of the founders of the Hindu religion and polity, has proved the source of many errors in the case of a people who are invariably guided simply by the impression of their senses, and who, accustomed to judge things only by their outward appearance, have taken literally that which was represented to them under symbols, and have thus come to adore the actual image itself instead of the reality.

This system of explanatory symbolism has always been, and is even now, so familiar to Hindu writers, that they often describe their three great divinities by the allegorical designations peculiar to each. We have seen, too, that they recognize in men three sorts of dispositions or qualities which they call *satva, rajas, támas. Satva* is the gentle and insinuating disposition; *rajas,* the irascible, furious, passionate; *tamas,* the dull, heavy, and lethargic.

They attribute one of these qualities to each of the divinities which compose the *Trimurti.* Thus Vishnu is endowed with *satva,* Siva with *rajas,* and Brahma with *tamas.* Again, these same qualities are also applied to the three elements. The earth, like Brahma, is heavy and indifferent by nature; the water, like Vishnu, is insinuating and penetrating; the fire, like Siva, is capable of destroying everything by its violence.

The quality *tamas* is so inherent in the earth that Hindu astronomers often confound the two. Thus in a lunar eclipse, when the darkness of the earth intercepts the rays of the sun, they say that the *tamas-bimbam,* or the disk *tamas,* obscures *by its shadow* the disk of the moon.

The quality *rajas,* characteristic of fire and represented under the form of Siva, is ascribed in a special manner to that deity by the Hindu poets; and although the name of Siva, which is most commonly used, signifies *joy,* the deity bears many other names which seem to show that he is no other than fire personified.

Such, for instance, is the name *Jwala* (the inflamed), under which he is well known.

I shall here relate a strange practice which seems to me to support the opinion I hold regarding the origin of the *Trimurti*. Sometimes during the periods of excessive heat the Hindus suppose that Siva, from whom it emanates, is more than usually inflamed. Consequently, fearing lest he should set everything on fire, they place over the head of his idol a vessel filled with water. In this vessel a little hole is pierced, so that the water may, by falling on him drop by drop, refresh him and abate the burning heat that consumes him.

The quality *satva*, ascribed to Vishnu, applies also to water, which penetrates and insinuates itself into the earth, rendering it fertile; for the name of Vishnu signifies *one who penetrates everywhere*. *Appu* (water) is a common enough name for this deity; but the commonest of all is *Narayana*, that is to say, *one who moves upon the waters*.

Furthermore, the idea that the three principal divinities of India are the elements personified is admitted by a great number of Vishnavite Brahmins, and I am indebted to some of these for a portion of the arguments on which I have based my own view. They have at the same time told me that they themselves regard all that is commonly related of the *Trimurti* as mere fables; but as the disclosure of such a sentiment, which tends to nothing less than the undermining of one of the principal foundations of the popular religion, would stop the sources of their emoluments, and would at the same time expose them to public indignation, they are careful never to publish their private opinion on the matter.

This theory once admitted, it will be easy to find a very clear and natural meaning for certain expressions contained in the Hindu books—expressions which have led many authors to believe that the people of India possessed from the earliest times some knowledge of the Trinity. 'These three gods,' say those books, 'are but one; Siva is the heart of Vishnu, and Vishnu the heart of Brahma; it is one lamp with three lighted wicks.' At first sight these expressions would appear to indicate one god in three persons. But, even granted it were true that the primitive Hindus intended to transmit to their posterity the idea of the Trinity under the form and attributes of the *Trimurti*, it

must be confessed that the result has been a sadly distorted presentation of this great mystery. On the other hand, I believe there is another explanation which is more simple and more reasonable. I cannot indeed doubt that the Hindu writers, in using the expressions just quoted, and many others of the same kind, wished them to be understood to mean that the co-operation of the three elements in question was indispensable for the production and reproduction of everything that exists in nature, a co-operation so necessary that the absence of one would reduce the others to a state of complete inertness and impotence.

The early Fathers of the Christian Church, such as St. Justin, St. Clement, Theodoret, St. Augustine, and others, proved the truth of the mystery of the Trinity to the heathens of their time by the authority of the ancient Greek philosophers, and particularly by that of Plato and his principal disciples, such as Plotinus and Porphyry. They gained at that time considerable advantage by laying stress on those authorities in whose works were to be found the words *Father, Son, Word, Spirit*; *the Father* comprehending perfection, *the Son* perfectly resembling *the Father*, and *the Word* by whom all things were created; these three Persons being but one God. Such expressions were not the chance creations of those philosophers; they formed the foundation of the system of Plato, who did not, however, venture to teach their meaning to a people steeped in the follies of polytheism, lest he should be treated in the same manner as his master Socrates.

Nevertheless, I doubt whether the illustrious Fathers of the Christian Church would have laid so much stress upon such authorities had they not found in the writings of these Platonic philosophers expressions more precise, less inconsistent, and less tainted with materialism than those to be found in the Hindu books relating to *Trimurti*.

My readers have, no doubt, been astonished to find that air, the element which some ancient Greek philosophers considered to be the beginning and ending of everything created, has so far not figured in this discussion. As a matter of fact, the Hindus go farther than the Greeks. They recognize five elements, and the air is divided by them into *ether* and *wind*, or, properly speaking, air, which is personified under the name of Indra, the chief of the inferior deities and the king of the ethereal regions,

where he dwells. The word Indra signifies *the air*; in his domains the winds blow according to his commands. In the *Indra-purana* we find these words: 'Indra is nothing else than the wind, and the wind is nothing else than Indra.' The wind by condensing the clouds produces lightning, which is the weapon of this deity. He launches it against the giants, with whom he is often at war; and he is sometimes victorious, sometimes vanquished. The clouds, whose various forms represent the giants, sometimes stop the wind; sometimes, on the other hand, the latter disperses the clouds and rids the air of them.

This taste for allegory, which is inherent amongst all people in rudimentary stages of civilization, has become in the case of the Hindus an inexhaustible source of errors in matters of religion. In the earlier ages would-be commentators, by interpreting in their own way ideas whose original meaning had become obscured by lapse of time, confused everything instead of making everything clear; and later their successors, wearied by attempts to explain what seemed to them inexplicable, stuck to the literal meaning, and thus revived the extravagant and barbarous idolatry which forms the religious system of the modern Hindus.

CHAPTER II

Metempsychosis.—Explanation of this Religious Doctrine.—Penalties for Different Sins.—The Hindus as Authors of the Doctrine of Metempsychosis.—Difference between them and the Greeks in this Respect.—*Naraka*, or Hell; Punishments endured there.—Abodes of Bliss.

THERE are few Hindu books in which the doctrine of metempsychosis is not explained and expounded. This doctrine is, as is generally known, one of the fundamental principles of the Hindu religion. The following is an extract from the *Bhagavata*:—'Vishnu, the Supreme Being, before creating anything which now exists, began by creating souls[1], which at first animated bodies of fantastic shapes. During their union with these bodies they either committed sin or practised virtue. After a long abode in these provisional dwelling-places, they were withdrawn and summoned before the tribunal of Yama, who judges the dead. This divinity admitted into *Swarga* (paradise) those souls which had led virtuous lives; and he shut up in *Naraka* (hell) those souls which had given themselves up to sin. Souls which had been partly virtuous and partly sinful were sent to earth to animate other bodies, and so to endure proportionately the pain due for their sins and to receive the reward of their virtues. Thus every new birth, whether happy or unhappy, is the result of deeds practised in previous generations, and is either the reward or punishment for them. We may thus judge

[1] The philosophers of the School of Pythagoras held that these souls were not only immortal but eternal; that is to say, they existed before they entered the bodies of living creatures. The soul, they said, cannot be born of anything mortal; otherwise all things might become immortal. Nor can the soul be reborn of anything immortal, because that which is immortal cannot be reproduced. They held, therefore, that the soul is part of God Himself.—DUBOIS.

by the condition of a person in an existing generation what he has been in the previous one.

'Nevertheless, those who die in holiness are no longer exposed to new births; they go straight to *Swarga.*

'The souls of men, after death, go to animate other bodies. Sometimes it is the body of an insect, of a reptile, of a bird, or of a quadruped, and sometimes it is the body of another man. Nevertheless, the most perfect are admitted into *Swarga*, and the most guilty are plunged into *Naraka.* It is solely according to their good or bad deeds that their transmigration, advantageous or otherwise, is determined; and the good or evil they will have to experience in the various states through which they pass is determined in the same manner.

'The distinctions and differences which are to be observed amongst mankind must be attributed to the same causes. Some are rich, and others poor; some are weakly, others enjoy good health; some are handsome, others ugly; some are of low birth, others highly born; some are happy, others unhappy. These differences are not the result of mere chance, but of goodness or wickedness, as the case may be, in preceding existences.

'Man is the highest form of all the creatures on earth. To be born a man, in whatever caste it may be, always presupposes a certain degree of merit.

'Among men the Brahmins hold the first rank. The honour of giving a soul to a Brahmin is the reward only of the accumulated merits of many previous generations.

'To practise virtue in the hope of some reward is always a good thing; but to practise it with entire disinterestedness and without expecting any return or recompense, this is the most perfect. Those who thus practise it are certain of the happiness of *Swarga*, and are no more subject to change.

'This then is the fruit of our deeds. This is the reason why the same soul lives sometimes in the body of a man, at other times in that of an animal. This is why it is at one time happy, at another time unhappy, in this world and in the other.'

I will not follow the author in his detailed enumeration of the penalties which are reserved for various sins. I shall confine myself to the most important of them.

'He who kills the cow of a Brahmin will go after death to

hell, where he will for ever be the prey of serpents, and tormented by hunger and thirst. After thousands of years of horrible sufferings he will return to the world to animate the body of a cow, and will remain in this state as many years as the cow has hairs on its body. At length he will be born a Pariah, and will be afflicted with leprosy for a period of ten thousand years.

'The murder of a Brahmin, for any cause whatsoever, is a sin four times more heinous than the former. Whoever is guilty of it will be condemned at his death to take the form of one of those insects which feed on filth. Being reborn long afterwards a Pariah, he will belong to this caste, and will be blind for more than four times as many years as there are hairs on the body of a cow. He can, nevertheless, expiate his crime by feeding forty thousand Brahmins.

'If a Brahmin kills a Sudra, it will suffice to efface the sin altogether if he recites the *gayatri* a hundred times.

'He who kills an insect will himself become an insect after death. Then he will be reborn a Sudra, but he will be subject to all sorts of infirmities.

'Every Brahmin who cooks for a Sudra or who travels mounted on an ox will go to hell after death. He will be plunged there into boiling oil and be bitten continuously by venomous snakes. He will be reborn afterwards under the form of one of those birds of prey which devour corpses, and will remain a thousand years under this form, and also a hundred years under the form of a dog.

'Whoever fells a sacred fig-tree commits a crime four times greater than the murder of a Brahmin, and will be exposed after his death to penalties proportionate to a sin so heinous.'

Several modern philosophers have maintained that Pythagoras attached only an allegorical sense to the doctrine of metempsychosis. The most general opinion is that he taught it merely as an abstract religious doctrine. He is said to have borrowed it from the Egyptians, who, if we are to believe Herodotus, were its inventors. But the communications between Pythagoras and the Brahmins and Gymnosophists of India lead one to suppose with quite as much reason that he borrowed it from these Indian philosophers, for we know that the Hindus have never copied anything from contemporaneous nations. If it be true that at the

time of the travels of Pythagoras the doctrine of metempsychosis was professed by the Egyptians, they had probably taken their ideas from the same sources as the people of India, if indeed they had not actually borrowed them from the latter. It is certain, furthermore, that it is not in this alone that the metaphysics of Pythagoras present some features of resemblance to those of the Gymnosophists. Again, we know that Pythagoras travelled for his own instruction, and it has never been contended that he taught anything to the peoples of Asia whom he visited. Besides, various Hindu books, which undoubtedly existed before the time of Pythagoras, are filled with this doctrine of metempsychosis and treat of it as an article of their primitive faith, which had been well established before his time. Anyhow, whoever the originator of it may be, it is none the less wonderful that such a chimerical system was not only acknowledged in almost the whole of Asia, but has even found credence in various other parts of the world. It is well known that Caesar found it in full force amongst the Gauls[1]; and one is astonished to find that enlightened men like Socrates and Plato made these fantastic theories the object of their serious speculations. Have we not seen modern writers, too, contending that the doctrine of metempsychosis is a masterpiece of genius? They have indeed maintained that Aristotle admitted the transmigration of the soul of one man into another, though it is proved that he rejected as absurd the idea of the transmigration of human souls into the bodies of beasts.

In consequence of his belief Pythagoras deprecated the eating of the flesh of any living creature, lest perchance a son might feed on the body of his father and thus repeat the horrible feast of Thyestes. The most zealous of his disciples ate only vegetables; and they even excluded beans from their meals. In the same way the Brahmins still refuse to eat onions, mushrooms, and certain other vegetables. Still, the example of these more rigorous disciples of Pythagoras found few imitators among the rest.

1 'Druides in primis hoc volunt persuadere, non interire animas sed ab aliis post mortem transire ad alios; atque hoc maxime ad virtutem excitari putant, metu mortis neglecto' (*De Bello Gallico*, vi. 14). Most heretics of the primitive Church, to say nothing of the Jews of later times, believed in this monstrous superstition, which was recognized also by Origen.—DUBOIS.

Either Pythagoras conceived a false impression of the motives of the abstinence which he had seen practised by the Hindus, or else he wished to excel them and to exaggerate their system according to his own manner.

As a matter of fact, everything induces us to believe that the Hindus, though foolish enough in many respects, are not so foolish as to believe, when they show repugnance to feeding on anything which has had life, that they might be swallowing the limbs of their ancestors. In proof of this I may remark that the Lingayats, that is to say, the followers of Siva, reject *in toto* the doctrine of metempsychosis, yet they abstain from all animal food more religiously perhaps than the Brahmins themselves.

The fear of pollution and the horror of murder are in fact the principal causes of the antipathy of Hindus to this kind of food. Their primitive teachers, as I have already remarked, simply had in view, when counselling such abstinence, the preservation of useful animals, and also the preservation of health. It was superstition, impetuous as a flood, that always tended to overflow the banks of reason.

We have already seen how susceptible and fastidious a respectable Hindu is in the matter of pollution. How then could a meat diet agree with his principles in this respect? The putrefaction of animals, which in a hot country manifests itself so quickly and in so disagreeable a manner; the comparative facility, on the other hand, with which products of the earth and other inorganic substances can be kept from the putrefying influence of the sun; the horror, so strongly felt, of feeding on the remains of a dead body; and a number of other prejudices which the leaders of the Hindu religion have been interested in fostering, are reasons sufficiently powerful to act upon minds prepared for them by custom and education. Let us add to these considerations the horror inspired by murder among Hindus in general—a horror which is so great in the case of many that it induces them to spare even the lives of filthy and troublesome insects; for the Brahmins are persuaded that there is no difference between the souls of men and those of the vilest of living things. Hence they hold that there is, morally speaking, as much crime in crushing an ant as in committing a murder.

The majority of the Sudras feel no scruples, it is true, in killing animals and eating their flesh, the cow alone excepted. They even include in their ranks butchers and professional hunters, such as the *Boyas* or *Baiders* who inhabit the jungles and mountains and live on the products of the chase. But it is also proper to remark that it is this violation of a respected usage which in a great measure brings upon them the contempt of the higher castes.

At first the doctrine of metempsychosis appears to have been limited to the successive transmigrations of souls into various human bodies. Later on, however, it received a new expansion, viz. that the souls could migrate to the bodies of beasts and to all material objects. The Platonic philosophers, who were ridiculed for assuming that the soul of a king might enter the body of a monkey, or that of a queen the body of a grass-hopper, tried to evade the difficulty by reducing the doctrine to its primitive simplicity, that is to say, by limiting the trans-migration of the souls of men to human bodies and those of beasts to their own species. Plotinus and Porphyry even ventured to assert that it was thus that their master had intended it to be understood. But their retractation was too late. It is always a mistake to endeavour to restore a building which is not solid in its foundations. The Hindus, who are more persevering and less exposed to the contradictions of enlightened men, have religiously preserved their own doctrine of metempsychosis in all its entirety.

After all, the doctrine seems to have been invented merely to justify, under a gross allegory, the ways of the Supreme Being in the dispensation of rewards and punishments. The first doctrinal article admitted by the Hindus is common to the Pythagoreans; namely, that sin ought to be punished and virtue rewarded. This of course does not usually take place in the present life, since very often vice is triumphant and virtue crushed. In order to remedy this the gods, who hold the destinies of men in their hands, have decreed that he who during his lifetime has been an unbeliever, a thief, a murderer, &c., shall be born again a creeping insect, a wild animal, an outcaste, blind, poor, &c.

Their notions of pollution pervade everything; so the Hindus believe that a soul after death retains some of the stains and

impurities contracted in preceding generations, just as an earthen vessel retains for a long time the odour of any strong liquor which it has contained. This article of belief is illustrated by the example of a woman who had been a fish in an earlier generation, and who, though really a woman in the present, still retained, it is said, an odour which betrayed her first origin. It is necessary therefore that a long succession of generations should cleanse the soul from all the impurities which have polluted it in generations preceding—impurities which will increase indefinitely if people continue to lead dissolute lives.

When the Hindus are asked what is the limit of these transmigrations, they are unable to give any positive answer. Nevertheless their sacred books affirm that a soul only succeeds in getting rid of continual transformations when by long penance and contemplation it has raised itself to that high degree of wisdom and perfection which identifies it with the Supreme Being, that is, with Parabrahma. Before reaching such sublime heights, it must pass through all the trials and temptations to which human weakness has been condemned, and must acquire by its own experience a complete knowledge of good and evil. It begins its transmigrations under the form of the vilest insects, and rises little by little to the condition of man, in which state the spark of wisdom concealed in it, after having remained stationary for millions of years, is at length developed and imperceptibly leads to that state of perfection and purity which puts an end to changeful existence In not assigning definite periods to each transmigration of the soul the Hindu philosophers seem to be wiser than the followers of Plato, who, with absurd presumption, have seen fit to assign fixed and definite periods—in some cases three thousand, and in others ten thousand years. Further, according to the latter, the transmigration is not left to chance; each soul has its choice of abode according to the inclinations of the man in whose body it has sojourned. Thus the soul of Agamemnon passed into the body of an eagle; that of Orpheus animated a swan; that of Ajax, a lion; that of Thersites, an ape, &c.

All this is simply ridiculous. But the stumbling-block of the system is recollection of the past. Since the body is only a prison, a shell, how is it that the soul, as soon as it has quitted its abode, loses all remembrance of what has befallen it? Pytha-

goras, it is true, used to relate to his disciples what he had successively been since the siege of Troy[1]. But the merest caviller among them might have offered the following objection: 'Since you so well remember what you have been before your present actual existence, why do I not remember in the same manner?' Pythagoras would no doubt have answered just as the Hindus answer, namely, that the gift of remembrance is granted only to certain privileged souls, and that they obtain it by reciting certain appropriate *mantrams*. Unfortunately, these *mantrams* are not unlike the waters of the Fountain of Youth, of which every one boasts to be the owner, but the whereabouts of which nobody knows. Plato, who was too enlightened not to recognize this weak side of the system, invented the river Lethe. The souls were obliged to drink its waters before returning to the world, and thereby entirely forgot the past. The invention of this fiction required neither ingenuity nor wit. The Hindus cut the knot more freely. They say that the act of regeneration suffices to make one forget all that has been seen or done before. A child under two or three years of age does not remember one day what he did the day before; still more therefore will he forget what he was and what he did before his new birth.

This explanation is at least more simple than that of Plato, if it is not equally ingenious.

NARAKA, OR HELL.

Through the tissue of vain fancies which the Hindus have woven over their system of metempsychosis, ostensibly to explain it but in practice to obscure it, we may catch a few faint gleams of the true religion, the principles of which were inculcated by the patriarchs of old. Apart from the rewards and punishments which they regard as the due retribution in this world of the good or evil which a man has done in a preceding generation, it is certain that they acknowledge a future life, and a Supreme Being, who is the rewarder of the good and the terror of the wicked. In a word, they recognize a paradise and a hell.

But how grievously have these sacred truths been distorted in

[1] See Ovid's *Metam.* xv. 3.

the mouths of these ministers of idolatry and falsehood! It is difficult to discover a single trace of such fundamental truths amid the mass of extravagant fables under which superstition has concealed them.

The Hindus agree that a place of punishment is set apart for those souls which have given themselves up entirely to sin during their life on earth. This they call *Naraka* or *Patala*. It is divided into seven principal sections, destined to contain the different kinds of sinful souls; and here they undergo torments more or less severe, according to the gravity of their crimes.

Yama, the judge of the dead, is the king of hell. He has servants to carry out his decrees, who are charged with tormenting the inhabitants of *Naraka*. His emissaries are constantly on the watch throughout the world. They await the moment of death, and then arrest the dead and bring them before Yama's tribunal. Yama consults his records, kept by many scribes working under his orders, and containing an exact account of all the good and evil which is done on earth. According to the report submitted to him, this sovereign judge pronounces the fate of the souls which appear before him for judgement, and awards punishments proportionate to their guilt.

Yama, however, is not the only deity possessing agents on earth for seizing upon the souls of the dead. Vishnu and Siva have also their agents, who know perfectly well the devotees of their respective patrons. When such souls die the emissaries of the two gods contend for them with Yama, and the result is a keen conflict and often a bloody battle. The special devotion to Siva or to Vishnu, however lukewarm it may have been, possesses so much merit that the emissaries of the two gods usually gain the victory over those of Yama.

As for the torments of *Naraka*, the punishments which the wicked have to endure there are truly terrible. I will here give an abstract of what the *Padma-purana* says of it:—

They are buried there in eternal darkness: only groans and frightful lamentations are heard; the sharpest pains that steel and fire can cause are inflicted without respite. There are punishments fitted to each kind of sin, to each sense, to each member of the body. Fire, steel, serpents, venomous insects, savage beasts, birds of prey, gall, poison, stenches; in a word

everything possible is employed to torment the damned. Some have a cord run through their nostrils, by which they are for ever dragged over the edges of extremely sharp knives; others are condemned to pass through the eye of a needle; others are placed between two flat rocks, which meet, and crush without killing them; others have their eyes pecked incessantly by famished vultures; while millions of them continually swim and paddle in a pool filled with the urine of dogs or with the mucus from men's nostrils, &c.

The damned do not succumb under these terrible penalties, but rend the air continually with their screams and groans, which echo throughout the whole abyss of hell and add still greater horror to this frightful dwelling-place.

The pains of hell do not endure for ever; they last proportionately to the gravity of the crimes committed. The Hindu sacred writers say nothing of eternal punishment. At the end of every *yuga*, they say, there takes place a universal revolution —a total change in nature. When the *Kali-yuga*, in which we now live, has filled its allotted span, all souls will return to the divine essence from which they were originally separated, and, the world having come to an end, the sufferings of the damned will cease also. I have before mentioned how many years of the *Kali-yuga* have already elapsed, and how many millions of years it has still to run.

When the souls in hell have expiated their sins, they are sent back to the earth in order to undergo new transmigrations. Their return to the world always takes place under the form of some vile animal; and proceeding from one metamorphosis to another, after millions of years they are able to acquire the degree of virtue and perfection necessary to admit of their being again united inseparably with the Supreme Being, the Universal Soul of the world.

The Abodes of Bliss.

The Hindus recognize several Abodes of Bliss for the souls of those who have expiated their sins by repeated transmigrations and by the practice of virtue. There are four principal abodes: The first is *Swarga*, where Indra the divinity presides, and where all virtuous souls, without distinction of caste or sex, are to be found.

The second is *Vaikuntha*, the paradise of Vishnu, where dwell his particular followers, Brahmins and others.

The third is *Kailasa*, the paradise of Siva, which is reserved for the devout worshippers of the *lingam*.

The fourth is *Sattya-loka* (the Place of Truth), the paradise of Brahma, where only virtuous Brahmins have the right to enter.

The pleasures enjoyed in these several abodes are all corporal and sensual.

The souls sojourning in them, having been indulged for periods of time more or less considerable according to their respective merits, are obliged to return to the earth, there to begin their transmigrations anew. This takes place until the soul is perfectly purified—a consummation, as we have seen, which is not the affair of a few days. However, with perseverance they eventually attain it. When a soul, by virtue and penances, has become as pure as gold and has freed itself entirely from the allurements of this world, it is re-united with Parabrahma, with God, with the Universal Soul, just as a drop of water returns to the sea from whence it came. This is the Supreme Happiness, to which the Hindus give the names of *Moksham* (Deliverance) and *Mukti* (the Last End).

Thus idolatry, whatever tendency it may have to corrupt all things, has at least respected some of the fundamental truths graven on the hearts of men, the knowledge of which is indispensable to the stability of all civilized society. The people of India, sunk from time immemorial in the darkness of error by reason of the avarice and ambition of their religious teachers, still preserve some positive ideas of a Supreme Being, and foresee rightly enough the immortality of the soul, and the necessity and existence of another life in which the good shall be rewarded and the wicked punished.

What other conclusion can we draw from this than that such sacred truths will never perish from off the earth? The atheist and the materialist may heap up sophistry on sophistry in order to obscure these truths and conceal them from the eyes of nations; but their efforts are in vain. Graven on the hearts of men in indelible characters by the hand of the Almighty Himself, these truths must continue to grow and to bear fruit so long as there are reasonable creatures and civilized peoples in the world.

CHAPTER III

Hindu Feasts.—The New-Year Feast.—The Feast of the Household Gods.—Commemoration of the Dead.—Feast of the Schools.—Feasts in Honour of Serpents.—Military Feasts.—The Feast of Lamps.—Sacrifices to Plants.—The Feast of the Lingayats.—The *Pongul* Ceremonies.—General Remarks.

EACH district and each temple of the least importance has its own particular feasts, recurring at intervals during the course of the year; and besides these local feasts there are many others that are generally observed everywhere, taking place at fixed periods. Feast-days are given up to rejoicings and diversions of all kinds; work is entirely suspended; relatives and friends meet together and feast each other in turn; the houses are decorated, the best jewels and apparel are worn, and the time is spent in games, which for the most part are very artless and innocent. Family feasts, however, have not the smallest resemblance to those celebrated in temples, to which the people flock from every side, and which often give rise to the most scandalous scenes.

There are in all eighteen obligatory Hindu feasts in the year, but I will mention only the principal ones. First, there is the feast which is celebrated on the first day of the year, called *Ugadi*[1], and which falls on the day of the new moon in the month of March. On this occasion Hindus are expected to pay each other visits of ceremony. The feast lasts for three days, during which they give themselves up to enjoyment. Fireworks are let off, and cannon, rockets, and guns are heard on every side. It is about this time, also, that the officers of Government prepare their revenue accounts for the year, and that the cultivators renew the leases of the lands which they farm.

[1] This is the name given to the Telugu New Year's Day.—ED.

At the time of the new moon in the month of February the Lingayats, or followers of Siva, celebrate with great pomp their feast *Siva-ratri* (Night of Siva). This lasts three days, and during the course of it the Lingayats wash and purify their *lingam*, cover it with a new cloth, and offer to it sacrifices of a special character. They also visit their *jangamas* or *gurus*, and present them with gifts[1].

The festival of *Gauri* takes place at the time of the new moon in the month of September, and lasts many days. Gauri is another name for Parvati, the wife of Siva, who is the object of peculiar worship on this occasion. On the last day of the feast they mould a figure of the goddess in rice dough; this is placed in a shrine beautifully adorned, and is then carried with great pomp through the streets. The *Gauri* feast, however, is also specially dedicated to the household gods, which are represented by the implements, tools, and utensils in common use amongst the people. Thus, the farmer collects his ploughs, his spades, and his sickles, and places them in a heap on a spot carefully purified by a layer of cow-dung. He prostrates himself at full length before the various implements of husbandry, and offers them *puja* and *neiveddya* according to the usual manner. He then puts them back in their places. The mason offers similar homage to his trowel, his square, &c.; the carpenter to his axe, his saw, and his plane; the barber to his razor; the writer to his pen or *stilus*; the tailor to his scissors and needles; the huntsman to his gun; the fisherman to his nets; the weaver to his loom; the butcher to his cleaver; and so on in the case of all artisans. The women, too, collect their baskets, winnows, rice-mills—in short, all their household implements, and prostrate themselves before them, offering them homage in like manner. In a word, there is not a person who, during this solemn time, does not regard as so many deities the instruments with which he gains his livelihood. The prayers which are addressed and the honours which are paid to them are intended to persuade them to continue to be useful to their possessors. In fact, the whole ceremony is based on the Hindu principle, that it is necessary to pay honour to everything which may be either useful or hurtful.

A month later, at the new moon of October, comes the

[1] Vide Appendix III.

feast of *Maha-navami*, known also under the name of *Dasara*, specially dedicated to the memory of ancestors. This feast is considered to be so obligatory that it has become a proverb that anybody who has not the means of celebrating it should sell one of his children in order to do so. Each family offers the usual sacrifices to its deceased ancestors, and also presents them with new cloths such as are usually worn by men and women, in order that they may be properly clothed. The feast lasts nine days. This is also the special festival of universities and schools. The students, dressed in gay apparel, parade through the streets every day, singing verses composed by their professors, who march at their head. They also recite these verses before the doors of their relatives and the principal inhabitants of the place. At the same time they dance and play in a simple fashion, marking time by striking sticks together. At the end of it all the professors receive small presents of money from the people before whom their students have performed. A portion of the sum collected is given to the students for a feast on the last day of the ceremonies, and the remainder the professors keep for themselves.

The *Dasara* is likewise the soldiers' feast. Princes and soldiers offer the most solemn sacrifices to the arms which are made use of in battle. Collecting all their weapons together, they call a Brahmin *purohita*, who sprinkles them with *tirtham* (holy water) and converts them into so many divinities by virtue of his *mantrams*. He then makes *puja* to them and retires. Thereupon, amidst the beat of drums, the blare of trumpets and other instruments, a ram is brought in with much pomp and sacrificed in honour of the various weapons of destruction. This ceremony is observed with the greatest solemnity throughout the whole Peninsula, not only by the Hindu princes and soldiers, but also by the Mahomedans, who have unreservedly adopted this idolatrous practice of the Hindus. It is known by the special name of *ayuda-puja* (sacrifice to arms), and is entirely military; no native belonging to the profession of arms, be he Pagan, Mahomedan, or Christian, makes any scruple of joining in it.

In order to increase the solemnity of the feast, the princes are in the habit of giving public entertainments, to which immense crowds of people resort. These entertainments resemble very

much the gladiatorial combats of the ancient Romans, consisting as they do of contests between animals, or between animals and men, and above all between men. Athletes sometimes come from long distances to contend for the prizes. They belong mostly to a caste called *Jetti*, and are trained from their youth in contests of the kind. Their profession is to injure one another in the presence of persons who are able to pay them for the satisfaction to be derived from this horrible sport, in which both princes and people take infinite delight. Ordinary blows with the fist, however vigorously applied, would not cause sufficient bloodshed, so before entering the lists the champions put on gloves studded with sharp pieces of horn. They fight almost naked, and before coming to close quarters dance about in threatening attitudes. Then they close furiously, and deal heavy blows on each other's heads with their murderous gloves. Needless to say, blood flows freely. When they have had enough of this, they seize each other round the body and fall struggling to the ground, where they tear at each other like wild beasts. At intervals they cease fighting to regain breath; but they soon begin again, and the combat does not end until the umpires separate them and one of the two is declared victor. Covered with wounds and literally bathed in blood, they retire and make room for new combatants, who fight with the same ferocity. This disgusting spectacle sometimes lasts for hours together, to the great satisfaction of the spectators, who mark their enthusiasm by constant applause. When all is over, the prince distributes among the champions prizes proportionate to the skill and strength which each of them has displayed. The wounds and dislocations of the injured are attended to by men of their own caste, the *Jettis* being generally very clever in surgery.

At the end of November or the beginning of December the *Deepavali* (feast of lamps) is celebrated. It occupies several days. Every evening while it lasts the Hindus place lighted lamps at the doors of their houses or hang paper lanterns on long poles in the street. This feast appears to be specially dedicated to fire. But as it is held at a time when most of the cereal crops are ready for harvesting, the cultivators in many places are then in the habit of going together in procession to their fields, and there offering up to their crops prayers and sacrifices

of rams or goats, in order, as it were, to give thanks to their crops for having ripened and become fit for the food of man. Every husbandman also, on three days in succession, proceeds to the dungheap which he has collected for manuring his fields and prostrates himself before it, presenting to it offerings of flowers, lighted tapers, boiled rice and fruits, and begging it humbly to fertilize his lands and to procure him abundant harvests. This worship, it may be remarked, very much resembles that which the Romans used to pay to their god Sterculius.

The *Nagara-panchami* is another great feast. It is celebrated in the beginning of February in honour of snakes, and especially of the most venomous species, such as the cobra, called *naga* or *nagara* by the Hindus. This reptile, which is very common and the most dangerous of all, is honoured in a very special manner on this occasion. The people pay visits to the holes where snakes of this sort are generally known to remain concealed, and make offerings to them of milk, plantains, &c. I shall have something more to say about this strange cult later on.

But the most solemn of all feasts, at any rate in the south of India, is the *Pongul*, which is also known in some places as the *Maha-sankranti*[1]. This feast is the occasion of great rejoicing; and the Hindus have two good reasons for regarding it with joy. One is because the month preceding the *Pongul*, which is entirely made up of unlucky days, has at last passed; the other is because the month which follows it must invariably consist of lucky days.

During the inauspicious month which preceded the *Pongul*, *sannyasis*, or mendicants[2], go from door to door about four o'clock in the morning, waking all sleepers by beating their gongs, warning them to be on their guard and to take every precaution against the evil influences of this unlucky period, by appeasing, by means of prayers and sacrifices, the god Siva, who presides over it. With this purpose in view, the women of the

[1] *Sankranti* is the name given to the first day of the solar month; that is to say, to the day on which the sun passes from one sign of the Zodiac to another. It refers here to its entrance into the sign of Capricorn, a period which the ancients celebrated as that of the *re-birth* of this bright luminary. —DUBOIS.

[2] These are *pandarams*, not *sannyasis*.—ED.

house every morning prepare a small patch about a yard square outside the door, smearing it with cow-dung, and tracing several white lines upon it with rice-flour. They then place within this square several pellets of cow-dung, each adorned with a pumpkin flower. I believe these pellets are supposed to represent Vigneshwara, the god of obstacles, whom they seek to appease by offering him a bouquet. But I do not know why it is that the pumpkin flower is chosen in this case. Every evening these little balls of cow-dung, together with their flowers, are carefully collected, to be kept till the last day of the month. When this day arrives the women, who alone are charged with this ceremony, put them into a new basket, and accompanied by musical instruments and clapping of hands, they solemnly carry them away beyond the precincts of their dwellings and throw them into a tank or some other retired but clean spot.

The *Pongul*, or *Maha-sankranti*, always takes place during the winter solstice, the period when the sun, having finished its course towards the southern hemisphere, turns to the north again and comes back to visit the people of India. The feast lasts three days; the first is called *Bhoghi-pongul* (*Pongul* of joy). On this day visits are exchanged between relatives and friends, who make presents and give entertainments to each other; the day passes in diversions and amusements of all sorts.

The second day is called *Surya-pongul* (*Pongul* of the sun). In fact the feast appears to be specially dedicated to the sun. The married women first of all bathe with their clothes on, and while still dripping wet put rice to boil in milk on a fire in the open air. As soon as it begins to simmer, they all cry out together, *Pongul, Pongul*! *Pongul, Pongul*! Almost immediately afterwards they remove the vessel from the fire and place it before the idol of Vigneshwara, to whom they offer a portion of the rice; another portion is given to the cows, and the rest is eaten by the people of the house.

On this day Hindus again exchange visits. On meeting each other the first words they say are: 'Has the rice boiled?' to which the answer is: 'It has boiled.' It is for this reason that the feast is called *Pongul* in the south of India, the word being derived from *pongedi* in Telugu, and *pongaradu* in Tamil, both signifying *to boil*.

The third day is called the *Pongul* of the cows. On this day they put into a big vessel filled with water some saffron powder, some seeds of the tree called *parati*, and some leaves of the margosa-tree. After mixing the ingredients well together, they sprinkle the cows and the oxen with the liquid, walking round them three times. All the men of the house (for the women are excluded from this ceremony) then turn successively towards the four points of the compass and perform the *sashtanga*, or prostration of the six members, four times before the animals[1].

The horns of the cows are painted in various colours, and round their necks are hung garlands of green leaves interlaced with flowers. On these garlands are hung cakes, cocoanuts, and fruits, which, as they are shaken off by the animals, are eagerly scrambled for and devoured, as though they were sacred things, by the crowd following.

The cows are then driven together outside the town or village, and are then made to scatter in all directions by the aid of drums and noisy instruments. On this day cattle are allowed to graze everywhere without restraint; and no matter what damage they may do in the fields, they are never driven away.

The idols are afterwards taken from the temples and carried in procession, to the sound of music, to the place where the cattle have again been collected. The temple dancing-girls, who are to be found at all feasts and public ceremonies, are not absent on this occasion; they march at the head of the large concourse of people, and from time to time pause to delight the spectators with their lascivious dances and obscene songs.

The feast terminates with a performance which, I believe, has no other object than simple amusement. The crowd forms itself into a big circle, in the middle of which a hare is let loose, which in its efforts to escape runs round and round, from side to side, exciting much laughter amongst the spectators, till at last it is caught.

The idols are then carried back to the temples, the cows are led back to the sheds, and thus ends the most popular of all Hindu feasts.

The *Pongul*, as I have said, is intended to celebrate the period when the sun is about to recommence its course. There would have been nothing blameworthy, nothing astonishing in the

[1] As already explained, it is prostration of the *eight*, not *six* members.—Ed.

people hailing with joy the appearance of this great fertilizing luminary in their hemisphere, and rendering praise and thanks to the Almighty as the Creator of it; but when we see a nation which professes to occupy the first place amongst the civilized races of the world treating this as an occasion for the most idle ceremonies, surely we ought not to attribute it simply to the weakness of the human mind. Ought we not rather to recognize in it the prompting of some evil spirit seeking to seduce men by the empty pomp that accompanies these insane practices? We should not hesitate to regard them as folly in a single individual; are they therefore less unreasonable or more excusable when an entire nation practises them? Our astonishment ceases when we carefully consider the causes that keep the Hindus enchained to degraded forms of worship like these. The fact is, the laws and customs, both religious and civil, of the Hindu people are so closely bound together, that it is impossible to attack the one without equally injuring the other. Custom, prejudice, and national predilection have all served to establish their belief that religion and polity are inseparable; and they are thoroughly convinced that neither the one nor the other can be changed without exposing the nation to the danger of sinking into a state of barbarism and anarchy. This rigorous observance of their religious rites on the part of the Hindus is rendered yet more inviolable by reason of the pride, sensuality, and moral laxity which constitute the national character. Everything presented to them by their religion contributes to the encouragement of the national vices. Passion, predilection, and self-interest all combine in fostering the forms of idolatry to which they are enslaved. Even their games, dances, and entertainments are all conducted with a licence which derives force from the fact that it is sanctioned by religion. How, it may well be asked, can a people so credulous, so easily influenced by sensual impressions and all the pleasures resulting from them—how can they help being devoted to a religious cult which accords so well with their natural inclinations?

Self-interest, again, that powerful motive of human actions, is not the feeblest support of Hindu idolatry. The priests of the Hindu religion, although too enlightened to be blinded by the follies which they instil into the minds of their weak fellow-

countrymen, are none the less zealous in maintaining and encouraging the absurd errors which procure their livelihood, and which keep them in that high estimation which they have wrongfully usurped.

Their deceitful tactics are specially noticeable in connexion with the feasts that are celebrated at the more important temples. The Brahmins who have charge of these enrich themselves by the offerings which the credulous and stupid worshippers periodically bring; therefore they take infinite pains to foster superstition and curry favour with the votaries. The triumphal cars, splendidly ornamented, on which the idols are exposed to public veneration in all the brilliant finery peculiar to India; the unceasing round of songs, dances, games, entertainments, and fireworks; the limitless crowd of devotees, the more wealthy among whom vie with each other in luxurious display and extravagant profusion; above all, the extreme licence which prevails on such occasions, and the facility with which every one can satisfy his depraved desires;—all these give infinite pleasure to a people who know nothing higher than such material enjoyments. Thus it is that crowds gather at these feasts from all parts; and the poor husbandman, whose whole harvest hardly affords subsistence for himself and family for six months during the year, will sell a part of it in order to contribute to the expenses incurred at the feasts, and to enrich the clever impostors who manage them[1]. But apart from the pomp and ceremony displayed for the purpose of dazzling the eyes of the people, the Hindu priests have recourse to another kind of deception. According to them nothing can equal the miracles which are daily wrought by the god of their particular temple in favour of those persons who put their trust in him and make him presents. Sometimes it is a barren woman who has ceased to be so, a blind man to whom the faculty of sight has been restored, a leper who has been cured, a cripple who has recovered the use of his legs, &c. There is not a single

[1] 'Une religion,' says Montesquieu, 'chargée de beaucoup de pratiques attache plus à elle qu'une autre qui l'est moins. On tient beaucoup des choses dont on est continuellement occupé; témoin l'obstination tenace des mahométans et des juifs et la facilité qu'ont de changer de religion les peuples barbares et sauvages qui, uniquement occupés de la chasse ou de la guerre, ne se chargent guère de pratiques religieuses.'—*Esprit des Lois*, XXV. 2.

Hindu who would dare to raise the shadow of a doubt concerning such miracles.

As depositaries of a religion to which they assign an origin that is lost in the darkness of ages, the Brahmins know very well how to make use of the fables and traditions which are at the bottom of it all, such as the wonderful adventures of the gods, giants, and ancient kings, the miraculous proceedings of the ancient Hindu sages, and the spiritual seclusion and sanctity of the ancient Hindu hermits. The austerity, however extravagant it may seem, of Brahmin penitents; the rigorous abstinence which ordinary Brahmins impose upon themselves; their frequent fasts; their daily ablutions; their excessive carefulness regarding external and internal cleanliness; their prayers; their long periods of meditation and absorption; the impenetrable secrecy and air of mystery which accompany their *sandhya*, their sacrifices, and the majority of their ceremonies; the sacred books, of which they are the sole interpreters;—all these contribute to support the influence which they have gained over minds that apparently will recognize as true only what dazzles the imagination, or what is contrary to common sense. So true it is, that mere reason is totally unable to raise mankind to a knowledge of God; in fact, no real religious cult can spring from man's reason alone. The more one reflects upon the gross absurdities pertaining to the idolatry of the Hindus, the more convinced one becomes of the inestimable benefit of Revelation, whereby the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, in Himself incomprehensible, reveals Himself to His creatures.

CHAPTER IV

Hindu Temples.—Ceremonies performed in them.—Temples built on Mountains.—Pyramids.—The Architecture of Pagodas.—The Shape and Ornaments of the Idols.—Their Consecration.—Sacred Pillars.—Temple Priests and Servants.—Sacrificers.—Dancing-girls.—Musicians.—Hindu Music.—Brahmin Tricks and Artifices for attracting Worshippers.—The Hindu Desire for Children.—The Revolting Practices to which they submit to obtain them.—Remarkable Ceremonies and Vows.—Prostitution in Certain Temples.—Religious Tortures.—The Rape of Women.—Famous Temples.—Tirupati.—Jagannath.—Public Processions.—General Remarks.

Buildings dedicated to religious worship are extremely numerous in India. There are few villages or hamlets which have not at least one. It is even a generally received opinion that no place should be inhabited where there is no temple, for otherwise the inhabitants would run grave risks of misfortune.

Among the good works expected of the rich, one of the most honourable and most meritorious consists in spending a part of their fortune in the construction and endowment of these sacred buildings. Such munificence, it is argued, is an infallible means of obtaining the protection of the gods, remission of one's sins, and admission into an Abode of Bliss after death. But vanity, ostentation, and desire to attract attention are much more powerful factors, if indeed they are not the only ones that excite beneficence on the part of the wealthy.

Besides the temples with which all villages are provided, one finds many erected in isolated spots, in woods, on the highways, in the middle of rivers, on the borders of tanks and other large reservoirs, and especially on the summits of steep rocks, mountains, and hills. This practice of constructing buildings consecrated to religious worship upon elevated sites must have struck all persons who have travelled in India. In

fact there are few mountains, where a well or a spring is to be found, that are not surmounted by a building of this sort. The choice of sites like these does not appear to be a matter of caprice. We know that the same practice exists among the majority of Asiatic nations. Not only the ancient heathen peoples, but even the children of Israel, always chose elevated sites for purposes of religious worship. When God ordered the Israelites to take possession of the land of Canaan, He commanded them above all things to destroy the heathen temples erected on mountains and other lofty spots, to break in pieces the idols, and to destroy the sacred groves with which those buildings were surrounded, as are those of the Hindus to this day. Holy Scripture refers often to these high places and sacred groves.

One can only offer conjectures regarding this custom of placing on elevated sites the temples dedicated to the sacrifices and vows which the people addressed to their gods. Some authors have remarked that the worship of the stars having always been more or less a part of pagan ritual, the heathen constructed their temples so as to face the east at a certain elevation, in order that the rising sun might flood the interior of the temples with its light and cast its rays upon the religious ceremonies which take place at that time of day[1]. No doubt, too, they thought they were thereby approaching as near as possible to the heavenly powers whom they invoked. Furthermore, the duties of the soothsayers often necessitated such elevated positions, in order that they might see the heavens clearly.

Besides the temples of idols which one meets with at every step in India, statues of stone, of baked earth, and especially of granite, representing objects of popular worship, may be seen on the high-roads, at the entrances of villages, near the *choultries*, on the borders of tanks, near rivers, in the market-places, and elsewhere. The Hindus also delight in placing these idols of stone under the shade of leafy trees, especially of those reputed sacred, such as the *aswatta*, the *alai*, the *vepu*, &c.[2]

[1] The ceremonies performed in honour of the infernal deities took place at sunset; and it is believed that the entrances of the temples of these divinities faced towards the west.—DUBOIS.

[2] The *Ficus religiosa*, the *Ficus indica*, and the *Melia Azadirachta*.—ED.

Some of these idols are placed in shrines, and others in the open air.

Most Hindu temples present a very wretched appearance, being more like barns or stables than buildings consecrated to the gods. Some of them are used as places of public assembly, courts of justice, or rest-houses for travellers. There are many, however, which as seen from a distance have an imposing effect and excite the admiration of the traveller. They recall to mind those ancient times when architects had an eye for posterity as well as for their contemporaries, and were much more intent on making their works durable than on securing elegance at the cost of solidity.

The structure of the large temples, both ancient and modern, is everywhere the same. The Hindus, devoted as they are to ancestral customs, have never introduced innovations in the construction of their public edifices. Their architectural monuments, such as they exist to-day, are probably better examples of building as practised by ancient civilized nations than the ruins of Egyptians and Greeks, concerning which European scholars have so much to say.

The entrance gate of the great pagodas opens through a high, massive pyramidal tower, the summit of which is ordinarily topped by a crescent or half-moon. This gate faces the east, a position which is observed in all their temples, great and small. The pyramid or tower is called the *gopuram*.

Beyond the tower is a large court, at the farther end of which is another gate, opening like the first through a pyramid of the same form, but smaller. Through this you pass to a second and smaller court, which is in front of the shrine containing the principal idol.

In the middle of this second court and facing the entrance to the shrine, you generally see upon a large pedestal, or within a kind of pavilion open on all sides and supported by four pillars, a coarsely sculptured stone figure, either of a bull lying flat on its belly, or of a *lingam*, if the temple is dedicated to Siva; or of the monkey Hanuman, or of the serpent *Capella*, if it is a temple of Vishnu; or of the god Vigneshwara; or maybe of some other symbol of Hindu worship. This is the first object which the natives worship before entering the shrine itself.

The door of the shrine is generally low and narrow, and it is the only opening which allows a free passage of air and light from outside, for the use of windows is entirely unknown in the Peninsula. The interior of the shrine is habitually shrouded in darkness, or is lighted only by the feeble flicker of a lamp which burns day and night by the side of the idol. One experiences a sort of involuntary shock on entering one of these dark recesses. The interior of the shrine is generally divided into two parts, sometimes into three. The first, which may be called the nave, is the largest, and it is here that the worshippers assemble. The second is called the *adytum*, or sanctuary, where the idol to whom the shrine is consecrated is placed. This chamber is smaller and much darker than the first. It is generally kept shut, and the door can be opened only by the officiating priest, who, with some of his acolytes, has alone a right to enter its mysterious precincts for the purpose of washing and dressing the idol and presenting the offerings of the faithful, such as flowers, incense of sandalwood, lighted lamps, fruit, butter-milk, rich apparel, and jewels.

Some of the modern Hindu temples are vaulted, but most of them have flat roofs supported by several rows of massive stone pillars, the capitals of which are composed of two heavy stones crossed, on which are placed the beams, also of stone, which extend through the length and breadth of the building. The beams again are covered horizontally with slabs of stone strongly cemented to prevent leakage. Whether the object be to make these buildings more imposing and solid, or to preserve them from the danger of fire, wood is never employed except for the doors.

The *adytum*, or sanctuary, is often constructed with a dome, but the building as a whole is generally very low, and this destroys the effect of its proportions in a striking degree. The low elevation; the difficulty with which the air finds a way through a single narrow and habitually closed passage; the unhealthy odours rising from the mass of fresh and decaying flowers; the burning lamps; the oil and butter spilt in libations; the excrements of the bats that take up their abode in these dark places; finally, and above all, the fetid perspiration of a multitude of unclean and malodorous people;—all contribute to render these sacred shrines excessively unhealthy. Only

a Hindu could remain for any length of time in their heated and pestilential precincts without suffocation[1].

The principal idol is generally placed in a niche. It is clothed with garments more or less magnificent, and on great festivals is sometimes adorned with rare vestments and rich jewels. A crown of gold set with precious stones often adorns its head. For the most part, however, the idols of stone wear a cap like a sugar-loaf, which imparts to the whole figure the appearance of a pyramid. The Hindus, by the way, appear to have a special fancy for the form of a pyramid, which perhaps is due to some symbolical notion. We know that various nations of antiquity, among others the Egyptians, regarded the pyramid as the symbol of immortality and of life, the beginning of which was represented by the base and the end or death by the summit. The pyramid was also the emblem of fire.

In vain are Hindu idols decked with rich ornaments; they are not rendered thereby less disagreeable in appearance. Their physiognomy is generally of frightful ugliness, which is carefully enhanced by daubing the images from time to time with a coating of dark paint. Some of the idols, thanks to the generous piety of rich votaries, have their eyes, mouth, and ears of gold or silver; but this makes them, if possible, yet more hideous. The attitudes in which they are represented are either ridiculous, grotesque, or obscene. In short, everything is done to make them objects of disgust to any one not familiar with the sight of these strange monsters.

The idols exposed to public veneration in the temples are of stone, while those carried in procession through the streets are of metal, as are also the domestic gods which every Brahmin keeps and worships in his house. It is forbidden to make idols of wood or other easily destructible material. I know only one, that of the goddess Mari-amma, which is of wood. For this image the wood of a certain tree is employed, the trunk of which is red inside, and which, when cut, exudes a sap the colour of blood, a characteristic which accords well with the merciless nature of this cruel divinity. It is true, one also often

[1] The Abbé nowhere remarks on the burning of camphor, which plays so conspicuous a part in all Hindu worship, and which acts at the same time as a disinfectant.—ED.

sees statues of clay or of masonry, but these are not of much account, and inspire very little veneration.

No idol can become an object of worship until it has been duly consecrated by a number of ceremonies. It is necessary first of all that the deity should be invoked, in order that it may fix its abode in the idol, and be incorporated with it; and this must be done by a Brahmin *purohita*. New temples are also subjected to a solemn inauguration, and all objects destined for their service must be formally consecrated. Both temples and idols are liable to be desecrated on many occasions. If, for example, a European, a Mahomedan, or a Pariah unfortunately entered a sanctuary or touched an idol, that very instant the divinity would take its departure. And in order to induce it to return, all the ceremonies would have to be begun over again, and performed more elaborately and at greater cost than before.

Besides the idols which are to be found inside every temple, the walls and four sides of the supporting pillars are covered with various figures. On the *façade* of the building niches are arranged, to contain symbolical figures representing men and animals, for the most part in indecent attitudes. Furthermore, the walls of the temple enclosure, which are no less thick and solid than the actual buildings, are also sometimes covered with these obscene or grotesque images. Outside the shrine, opposite and close to the entrance door, and sometimes in the middle of one of the courts, there is commonly seen a granite pillar, from forty to fifty feet high, octagonal in shape, and square at the base of the shaft; on each side of the lower part figures are sculptured. The pedestal is a solid mass of hewn stone. The capital of the column ends in a square cornice, at the four angles of which small bells are usually suspended. Above this, again, is a chafing dish in which incense is burned at certain times, or else lighted lamps are placed there.

The traveller often sees on the roads, and even in remote spots, lofty columns of this kind, on which certain devotees place lamps from time to time. During the feast of *Deepavali*, of which mention has been made above, and which is apparently held in honour of fire, lamps are to be seen burning every evening on such columns. Sometimes the pillars are wreathed

with pieces of new cloth, which are finally set on fire. These details favour the view that the pillars, constructed as they always are in places exposed to the east, are consecrated to the sun or to the element of fire.

Temple offices are held by persons of various castes. Nevertheless all posts of any importance, and especially those which confer profit and dignity, are always held by Brahmins.

Among the numerous officials in Hindu worship the sacrificers occupy first rank; then come the consultative committees, the directors of ceremonies, the collectors of temple revenues, and the treasurers. Besides these, there are hosts of subordinates who assist in the administration of the temple funds, and in the supervision and direction of religious observances.

Sometimes, but not frequently, the high functions of sacrificers are performed by common Sudras and even Pariahs. At one of the most famous temples of Mysore, called Melkota, during the great festival which is there celebrated annually, the Pariahs are the first to enter the sanctuary and to offer sacrifices to the idol, and it is only after they have finished that the Brahmins begin their sacrifices. I have already remarked that the Sudras are the only persons holding this office in temples where it is usual to immolate living victims.

A fact worthy of remark is that the officiating priests wear no special costume in the exercise of their sacerdotal functions; they are dressed in their ordinary clothes, which are, however, newly washed for the purpose.

In most of the temples the oblations and sacrifices are confined to the simple products of nature. The offering of lamps is also specially in vogue. Sometimes thousands may be seen burning around the idol and in the enclosure of the temple; they are filled with butter, which is a much more acceptable offering to the gods than oil.

Hindu priests offer up sacrifices regularly twice a day, morning and evening. The idol to which the sacrifice is offered is first thoroughly washed, and the water used for this purpose is brought from the river with much pomp and ceremony. In some of the great pagodas it is brought on the backs of elephants, preceded by dancing-girls and musicians, and escorted by a great number of Brahmins and various attendants. In other

temples the Brahmins themselves go with a similar show of ceremony to fetch the water morning and evening, bringing it on their heads in large brass vessels. The water that remains after the idol has been washed is called *tirtham* (holy water).

As soon as the task of washing the idol is over, the priest performs its toilet, which consists in putting on its clothes and tracing on its forehead one of the signs which the Hindus are accustomed to wear on their own foreheads. *Puja* is then offered to it. During these ceremonies the officiating priest tinkles a little bell, which is held in his left hand, the object no doubt being to call the attention of the worshippers to each stage in the ceremonial which is taking place inside the shrine and out of sight.

After completing his mysterious duties, which must be concealed from profane eyes [1], the priest appears and distributes to the people who are assembled in the hall of the temple fragments of the offerings made to the idol. This *prasadam* (sacred gift) is received with eagerness. If it is fruit or some other nutritious substance, it is eaten; if it is flowers, the men stick them in their turbans, while the women entwine them in their hair. Last of all, the priest pours into the hollow of each person's hand a little *tirtham*, which is drunk immediately. After this all the worshippers retire.

The courtesans or dancing-girls attached to each temple take their place in the second rank; they are called *deva-dasis* (servants or slaves of the gods), but the public call them by the more vulgar name of prostitutes. And in fact they are bound by their profession to grant their favours, if such they be, to anybody demanding them in return for ready money. It appears that at first they were reserved exclusively for the enjoyment of the Brahmins. And these lewd women, who make a public traffic of their charms, are consecrated in a special manner to the worship of the divinities of India. Every temple of any importance has in its service a band of eight, twelve, or more. Their official duties consist in dancing and singing within the temple twice a day, morning and evening, and also at all public ceremonies. The first they execute with sufficient grace,

[1] In Vishnu temples these 'mysterious duties' are performed behind a curtain drawn between the worshippers and the idol.—ED.

although their attitudes are lascivious and their gestures indecorous. As regards their singing, it is almost always confined to obscene verses describing some licentious episode in the history of their gods. Their duties, however, are not confined to religious ceremonies. Ordinary politeness (and this is one of the characteristic features of Hindu morality) requires that when persons of any distinction make formal visits to each other they must be accompanied by a certain number of these courtesans. To dispense with them would show a want of respect towards the persons visited, whether the visit was one of duty or of politeness[1].

These women are also present at marriages and other solemn family meetings. All the time which they have to spare in the intervals of the various ceremonies is devoted to infinitely more shameful practices; and it is not an uncommon thing to see even sacred temples converted into mere brothels. They are brought up in this shameful licentiousness from infancy, and are recruited from various castes, some among them belonging to respectable families. It is not unusual for pregnant women, with the object of obtaining a safe delivery, to make a vow, with the consent of their husbands, to devote the child that they carry in their womb, if it should turn out a girl, to the temple service. They are far from thinking that this infamous vow offends in any way the laws of decency, or is contrary to the duties of motherhood. In fact no shame whatever is attached to parents whose daughters adopt this career.

The courtesans are the only women in India who enjoy the privilege of learning to read, to dance, and to sing. A well-bred and respectable woman would for this reason blush to acquire any one of these accomplishments[2].

The *deva-dasis* receive a fixed salary for the religious duties which they perform; but as the amount is small they supplement it by selling their favours in as profitable a manner as possible. In the attainment of this object they are probably more skilful than similar women in other countries. They

[1] This custom is certainly not observed at the present day.—ED.

[2] In these days female education is slowly extending to all classes, and the prejudice which formerly existed no longer applies to women learning to read and sing, though dancing is still restricted to the professional dancing-girls, and is not considered respectable.—ED.

employ all the resources and artifices of coquetry. Perfumes, elegant costumes, coiffures best suited to set off the beauty of their hair, which they entwine with sweet-scented flowers; a profusion of jewels worn with much taste on different parts of the body; graceful and voluptuous attitudes: such are the snares with which these sirens allure the Hindus, who, it must be confessed, rarely display in such cases the prudence and constancy of a Ulysses.

Nevertheless, to the discredit of Europeans it must be confessed that the quiet seductions which Hindu prostitutes know how to exercise with so much skill resemble in no way the disgraceful methods of the wretched beings who give themselves up to a similar profession in Europe, and whose indecent behaviour, cynical impudence, obscene and filthy words of invitation are enough to make any sensible man who is not utterly depraved shrink from them with horror. Of all the women in India it is the courtesans, and especially those attached to the temples, who are the most decently clothed. Indeed they are particularly careful not to expose any part of the body. I do not deny, however, that this is merely a refinement of seduction. Experience has no doubt taught them that for a woman to display her charms damps sensual ardour instead of exciting it, and that the imagination is more easily captivated than the eye.

God forbid, however, that any one should believe me to wish to say a word in defence of the comparative modesty and reserve of the dancing-girls of India! Actions can only be judged by their motives; and certainly, if these Indian women are more reserved in public than their sisters in other countries which call themselves more civilized, the credit is due not to their innate modesty but to national prejudice. In fact, however loose the Hindus may be in their morals, they strictly maintain an outward appearance of decency, and attach great importance to the observance of strict decorum in public. The most shameless prostitute would never dare to stop a man in the streets; and she in her turn would indignantly repulse any man who ventured to take any indecent liberty with her. The man who behaved familiarly with one of these women in public would be censured and despised by everybody who witnessed the scandal. Is it the same among ourselves?

After the dancing-girls come the players of musical instru-

ments attached to the service of the temples. Every pagoda of any importance always has a more or less numerous band of them. They, as well as the dancing-girls, are obliged to attend the temple twice a day, and to fill it with discordant sounds. Their presence at all feasts and ceremonies is likewise obligatory. Moreover, they cannot be dispensed with during the great family feasts and ceremonies. The Hindu taste for music is so marked that there is not a single gathering, however small, which has not some musicians at its head.

Those who are regularly attached to a pagoda receive a fixed salary. The instruments on which they play are for the most part clarionets and trumpets; they have also cymbals and several kinds of small drums. The sounds produced by these instruments are far from pleasing, and may even appear hideous to European ears. The Hindus recognize a kind of harmony, however, in two parts: they have always a bass and a high counter-tenor or alto. The latter is produced by a wind instrument in the form of a tube widened at its base, the sounds of which have some resemblance to those of the bagpipe.

The vocal part is executed by a second band of musicians, who take turns with the dancing-girls in singing hymns in honour of the gods. Sometimes the Brahmins and other worshippers form the chorus, or sing separately sacred poems of their own composition.

The *nattuva*, or conductor, is the most remarkable of all the musicians. In beating time he taps with his fingers on a narrow drum. As he beats, his head, shoulders, arms, thighs, and in fact all the parts of his body perform successive movements; and simultaneously he utters inarticulate cries, thus animating the musicians both by voice and gesture. At times one would think he was agitated by violent convulsions.

The dancing-women, the chorus, and the orchestra take turn and turn about during a religious ceremony, which often terminates with a procession round the temple.

Morning and evening the courtesans before leaving never fail to perform for the idol, singing the while, the ceremony of the *aratti*, for the purpose of averting the fatal influence caused by the looks of evil-minded persons, an influence from which the gods themselves, as I have already said, are not exempt.

The whole musical *répertoire* of the Hindus is reduced to thirty-six airs, which are called *ragas*; but most of the musicians hardly know half of them.

Hindu music, whether vocal or instrumental, may be pleasing to the natives, but I do not think it can give the slightest pleasure to any one else, however little sensitive be his ear. Hindu musicians learn to play and sing methodically; they keep excellent time; and they have, as we have, a variety of keys. In spite of all this, however, their songs have always appeared to me uninspiring and monotonous, while from their instruments I have never heard anything but harsh, high, and ear-splitting sounds.

However, I admit that the chief reason why a European forms an unfavourable opinion of Hindu music is because he judges it by comparison with his own. To appreciate it rightly, we must go back two or three thousand years and imagine ourselves in those ancient times when the Druids and other priests used in their civil and religious ceremonies no other music but dismal cries and noisy sounds, produced by striking two metal plates together, by beating tightly-stretched skins, or by blowing horns of different kinds.

We must remember that Hindu music at the present day is the same as it has always been; and that, as in the case of their other arts, it has undergone no alteration and has not been improved in any way. We shall then feel obliged to be more indulgent; indeed, we may even feel astonished that Hindu music attained such perfection at the very beginning. For it is almost certain that the scale used at present by the Hindus has existed from the earliest times. It bears moreover a striking resemblance to ours, being composed of the same number of notes, arranged in the same way, as follows:—

Sa ri ga ma pa da ni sa
Do re mi fa sol la si do.

Are we then to deny the merit of this invention to Guy of Arezzo? And is John de Meurs, or whoever it was that perfected the system of the learned Benedictine, to have no other credit than that of having borrowed with discernment from the same source? We know that Vossius maintained that the Egyptians had a musical scale similar to ours many centuries before Guy

of Arezzo published his own. This question I must leave for others to solve.

There is nothing, as I have already shown, into which the Hindus do not introduce some superstitious notions, and it would have been a miracle if music—a diversion of the gods themselves—had not furnished them with means of satisfying their taste in this direction. Every note of the Hindu scale has a mark characteristic of some divinity, and includes several hidden meanings deduced from its particular sound or from something similar to it. There are also notes expressing joy, sadness, sweetness, anger, &c. And Hindu musicians take great care not to confound notes intended to express these varying passions of the human soul.

All the musicians who play wind instruments are taken, as I have already remarked, from the low barber caste, the profession being handed down from father to son.

Heathen worship being very expensive, the priests and servants of the temples have, necessarily, various sources of unfailing revenue. In some districts a kind of tithe is collected out of the whole produce of the harvest; in others, every temple has in its absolute possession extensive lands which are exempt from all taxation, and the produce of which is exclusively assigned to the maintenance of the temple and of its numerous staff. I have mentioned that in the case of these persons perquisites are of no small importance. The offerings of rich devotees, which are divided among them in proportion to their rank and dignity, are sometimes so considerable, in the principal temples, that they have aroused the cupidity of the princes of the country, particularly of Mahomedans. These latter, as a sort of compensation for tolerating a religion which they abhorred, thought fit to take possession of more than half of these offerings.

There is no trick which the Brahmins will not employ in order to excite the fervour of the worshippers, and thus to enrich themselves by their offerings. The most obvious means generally produce the best results. In the foremost rank we must place the oracles, a rich mine of wealth which pagan priests of other countries worked long ago with great success, and which the lapse of ages has not yet exhausted for the heathen priests of India. Here it is the idol itself which

addresses the dull and profoundly attentive crowd of worshippers, who are unable to understand that some cunning rogue, concealed inside or close by the god of stone, is speaking through the mouth of the idol. The idol, or its interpreter, also undertakes to foretell the future; but these oracles, like those of ancient Greece, contain some ambiguous or double meaning. Consequently, whatever the issue may be, the Brahmins always find some way of making it agree with their predictions[1].

If the flow of offerings by any chance decreases, the idol will inveigh vehemently against the indifference and meanness of the inhabitants of the district, proclaiming once for all that if this state of things continues, it will withdraw its protection from them, and will even resort to the expedient of decamping in search of other more grateful, and especially more generous worshippers[2].

Or perhaps the devout mob will some day find the hands and feet of their cherished idol bound with chains. Cruel creditors, it is announced, have brought it to this humiliating condition because it could not pay certain sums of money which it had borrowed in times of need; and they have sworn not to restore it to liberty until the whole sum, capital and interest, which is due to them shall have been repaid. Touched with compassion, the devotees will hasten to consult together and exact contributions from all possible sources until the sum necessary to liquidate the liabilities of their deity has been furnished to the Brahmins. As soon as the money is secured, the chains of the idol fall off, to the great satisfaction of everybody. In some famous temples, such as that of Tirupati, they use silver instead of iron chains to bind the sacred limbs of the idol.

There is another expedient to which the Brahmins frequently have recourse. All of a sudden it is proclaimed abroad that the idol has been attacked by a dangerous disease caused by the grief it experiences on seeing the devotion of the people abating from day to day. The idol is taken down from its pedestal and carried to the entrance of the temple, where it is exposed to the

[1] These false oracles are confined to temples dedicated to the inferior deities.—ED.

[2] This remark also applies only to the temples dedicated to the inferior deities.—ED.

public gaze. Its head and temples are rubbed with sundry lotions; drugs and medicines are placed before it; the priests from time to time feel its pulse with a display of the gravest uneasiness. Still the symptoms of the disease develop from day to day, and the priests begin to despair of the recovery of the idol. This alarming intelligence is bruited abroad, and presents and offerings soon arrive from all sides. At sight of these the idol's strength begins to return little by little; then it becomes convalescent; and finally it is cured and restored to its place.

Fear and awe are also means which the Brahmins turn to good account in order to renew the wavering faith of the people. They engage certain confederates, into whose bodies they affirm the angry god has sent a *pisacha*, or demon, in order to avenge some outrage which it has received from wicked men. One frequently meets with charlatans who fall into dreadful convulsions and make contortions and grimaces calculated to frighten the stoutest heart. In their calmer moments they give a piteous and detailed account of their misfortunes, which they attribute to the just resentment of the god, who is punishing them for their indifference towards himself and his ministers. They gabble phrases in many dialects, asserting that it is the demon who inspires them, and who has imparted to them the gift of languages. They eat all sorts of meat, drink intoxicating liquors, and observe none of the rules of caste.

But this is not imputed to them as a crime; it is all laid to the charge of the devil that possesses them. The multitude are filled with fear at the sight of one of these impostors, and prostrate themselves before him, worshipping the demon who has taken up its abode in him, and offering him oblations and sacrifices, in order to propitiate him and prevent him from injuring them. The demoniac is given his fill of meat and drink; and when he departs he is accompanied with much pomp and music to the next village, where he plays the same trick and finds just as many dupes. When he is pleased to come to his senses again, he exhorts his sympathetic audience to profit by the terrible example which he affords them, to show more faith in their god than he did, and to ensure the god's favour and protection by numerous gifts and offerings.

Miracles, again, are a most profitable branch of business for

Brahmins. They have all kinds, and suitable for every disease. The blind recover their sight, the lame walk, the dead come to life again. But the most popular miracle is that which gives fecundity to women. One continually hears of women whose pious devotion has obtained for them the signal favour of bearing children. I have already remarked that barrenness is the greatest possible curse to a woman in India, and the most dreaded of all the misfortunes that can befall a Hindu family.

Other nations which are very proud of their enlightenment and morality suppress the natural desire of seeing oneself born again in one's numerous progeny from considerations of personal interest and ambition, and regard the fruitfulness of their women with aversion. They are moreover not ashamed of resorting to wicked and disgusting means of reducing or destroying it altogether, thus outraging the most holy instincts of nature in order that they may not deprive themselves of the means of satisfying their ambition or of procuring the luxuries of life, as if the love of a father for his children were not the greatest of all pleasures. Animated in this respect by the noblest and purest sentiments, the Hindus consider a man happy in proportion to the number of children he possesses. Among them, indeed, children are considered to be the blessing of a house. However numerous a man's family may be, he never ceases to offer prayers for its increase.

The children, it is true, soon become useful to their parents. At five or six years old they begin to tend the calves, while those a little older take care of the cows and oxen. And as soon as they are strong enough they assist their fathers in tilling the fields or help in some other way to maintain the family.

There is a superstition, admirable enough in its way, which is a powerful factor in keeping up in the mind of a Hindu this ardent desire of seeing his race prolonged. In his eyes there is no misfortune equal to that of not leaving a son or a grandson behind to perform the last duties in connexion with his funeral. Such a deprivation is regarded as capable of preventing all access to an Abode of Bliss after death.

Hence it is that we see women who are slower in conceiving children than they would wish, hastening from temple to temple,

and sometimes ruining themselves in the extravagant gifts which they offer in order to obtain from the gods the inestimable favour of becoming mothers. Expert at reaping profit from the virtues as well as the vices of their countrymen, the Brahmins see in these touching impulses of nature merely a means of gaining wealth, and also at the same time an opportunity of satisfying their carnal lusts with impunity. There are few temples where the presiding deity does not claim the power of curing barrenness in women. And there are some whose renown in this respect is unrivalled, such, for example, as that of Tirupati in the Carnatic, to which women flock in crowds to obtain children from the god Venkateswara[1]. On their arrival, the women hasten to disclose the object of their pilgrimage to the Brahmins, the managers of the temple. The latter advise them to pass the night in the temple, where, they say, the great Venkateswara, touched by their devotion, will perhaps visit them in the spirit and accomplish that which until then has been denied to them through human power. I must draw a curtain over the sequel of this deceitful suggestion. The reader already guesses at it. The following morning these detestable hypocrites, pretending complete ignorance of what has passed, make due inquiries into all the details; and after having congratulated the women upon the reception they met with from the god, receive the gifts with which they have provided themselves and take leave of them, after flattering them with the hope that they have not taken their journey in vain. Fully convinced that the god has deigned to have intercourse with them, the poor creatures return home enchanted, flattering themselves that they will soon procure for their husbands the honour of paternity.

People who have not sufficiently reflected upon the extremes to which the superstitious and fanatical credulity of a people may be carried, have regarded as untrue the stories which Father Gerbillon, Tavernier, and other travellers have told of the Dalai-Lama. His excrements are carefully preserved, dried, and distributed as relics to pious Tibetans, who, when they fall ill, make use of them as an internal medicine, which is considered to be a sovereign remedy for all diseases. The fact I am about to relate, which, although even more revolting, is

[1] One of the names of Vishnu.

nevertheless quite true, will render any similar stories credible enough. It is not without shame that I enter upon an account of the disgusting incidents which I am here to describe. I would have passed them over in silence if the very nature of this work had not imposed upon me the painful duty of telling everything.

At Nanjangud, a village situated about ten leagues south of Seringapatam, there is a temple famous throughout Mysore. Among the numerous votaries who flock to it are many women, who go to implore the help of the idol in curing their sterility. Offerings and prayers are not the only ceremonies which have to be gone through. On leaving the temple the woman, accompanied by her husband, has to go to a place where all the pilgrims are accustomed to resort to answer the calls of nature. There the husband and the wife collect with their hands a certain quantity of ordure and form it into a small pyramid, which they are careful to mark with a sign that will enable them to recognize it. Then they go to the neighbouring tank and mix in the hollow of their hands the filth which has soiled their fingers. (But I will spare my readers the rest.) After having performed their ablutions they retire. Two or three days afterwards they visit their pyramid, and, still using their hands, turn the filthy mass over and over and examine it as carefully and as seriously as the Roman augurs scrutinized the entrails of sacrificed animals, in order to see if any insects have been engendered in it. In this case it would be a very good omen, showing that the woman would soon be pregnant. But if, after careful search, not even the smallest insect is visible, the poor couple, sad and discouraged, return home in the full conviction that the expenses they have been put to and the pains they have taken have been of no avail[1].

At Mogur, another village situated a short distance from the former (Nanjangud), there is a small temple dedicated to Tipamma, a female divinity, in whose honour a great festival is celebrated every year. The goddess, placed in a beautifully ornamented palanquin, is carried in procession through the streets. In front of her there is another divinity, a male. These two idols, which are entirely nude, are placed in

[1] We believe that no such disgusting practice exists nowadays. – ED.

immodest postures, and by help of a piece of mechanism a disgusting movement is imparted to them as long as the procession continues. This disgusting spectacle, which is worthy of the depraved persons who look upon it, excites transports of mirth, manifested by shouts and bursts of laughter. Nor is this all. A Pariah, who has made a special study of all the obscene and filthy expressions to be found in the Hindu language, is chosen; the goddess Tipamma is then evoked and takes up her abode in his person. Then any one who wishes to hear foul expressions stands before the man, and he is certain to be satisfied. As it is supposed to be Tipamma who speaks through the mouth of the Pariah, the devotees, far from being offended with him, are quite pleased with the goddess for having deigned to overwhelm them with insults. Even high-caste Hindus are to be seen at this festival seeking to obtain the coveted honour.

The goddess Tipamma of Mogur is not the only member of her family. She has six sisters, who are not in any way inferior to her in point of decency and politeness. Each one of them has her own temple, in which like ceremonies are performed. In the whole of Southern Mysore, from Alambadi as far as Wynaad, for a distance of more than thirty leagues, these abominable revels are held in the highest esteem.

There are temples in certain isolated places, too, where the most disgusting debauchery is the only service agreeable to the presiding deity. There children are promised to women who, laying aside all shame, grant their favours to all persons indiscriminately. At such places a feast is celebrated every year in the month of January, at which both sexes, the scum of the country-side, meet. Barren women, in the hope that they will cease to be so, visit them after binding themselves by a vow to grant their favours to a fixed number of libertines. Others, who have entirely lost all sense of decency, go there in order to testify their reverence for the deity of the place by prostituting themselves, openly and without shame, even at the very gates of the temple.

There is one of these sinks of iniquity five or six leagues from the village where I am writing these pages, on the banks of the Cauvery, in a lonely place called Junginagatta. The temple is not striking to look at; but the January feast is celebrated there with the utmost refinements of vice.

People have also pointed out to me a temple of the same description near Kara-madai, in the district of Coimbatore, and another not far from Mudu-dorai, in Eastern Mysore. I have before remarked that these dens of debauchery are always situated in places far removed from all habitations.

According to Herodotus and Strabo, every woman among the Assyrians and Babylonians was obliged to prostitute herself once in her life in the temple of the goddess Mylitta, the Aphrodite of the Greeks. This tradition so flagrantly defied the principles of modesty with which nature seems to have endowed even the majority of brute beasts that many modern writers, and among them Voltaire, have called its truth in question. What would they say of the infamous festivals of which I have just drawn a sketch? The authority of husbands in India is moreover such that it is impossible for debauchery of this kind to be carried on without their consent. But does superstition know any bounds? Many Hindu religious practices afford irrefutable proofs of the truth of similar incredible details which ancient historians have handed down to us.

Here the scene changes. It is no longer a question of licentious libertines profiting by the vicious tendencies or the stupid credulity of women in order to satisfy their passions. It is concerning the silly fanatics who make it their task to torture themselves and to mutilate their bodies in a hundred different ways. It is not uncommon to hear of Hindus, in case of a serious illness or of some imminent danger, making a vow to mortify some important part of their bodies, on condition of recovery. The most common penance of this sort consists in stamping upon the shoulders, chest, and other parts of the body, with a red-hot iron, the marks symbolical of their gods—brandings which are never effaced, and which they display with as much ostentation as a warrior does the wounds he has received in battle.

Devotees are often seen stretched at full length on the ground and rolling in that posture all round the temples, or, during solemn processions, before the cars which carry the idols. It is a remarkable sight to see a crowd of fanatics rolling in this manner, quite regardless of stones, thorns, and other obstacles. Others, inspired by extreme fanaticism, voluntarily throw themselves down to be crushed under the wheels of the car on which

the idol is borne [1]. And the crowds that witness these acts of madness, far from preventing them, applaud them heartily and regard them as the very acme of devotion.

Chidi-mari is another torture to which devotees submit themselves in honour of the goddess Mari-amma, one of the most evil-minded and bloodthirsty of all the deities of India. At many of the temples consecrated to this cruel goddess there is a sort of gibbet erected opposite the door. At the extremity of the crosspiece, or arm, a pulley is suspended, through which a cord passes with a hook at the end. The man who has made a vow to undergo this cruel penance places himself under the gibbet, and a priest then beats the fleshy part of the back until it is quite benumbed. After that the hook is fixed into the flesh thus prepared, and in this way the unhappy wretch is raised in the air. While suspended he is careful not to show any sign of pain; indeed he continues to laugh, jest, and gesticulate like a buffoon in order to amuse the spectators, who applaud and shout with laughter. After swinging in the air for the prescribed time the victim is let down again, and, as soon as his wounds are dressed, he returns home in triumph [2].

Some votaries, again, are to be met with who make a vow to walk with bare feet on burning coals. For this purpose they kindle a large pile of wood; and when the flames are extinguished and all the wood consumed, they place the glowing embers in a space about twenty feet in length. The victim stands at one extremity with his feet in a puddle expressly prepared for the purpose, takes a spring, and runs quickly over the burning embers till he reaches another puddle on the other side. In spite of these precautions very few, as one can imagine, escape from the ordeal with their feet uninjured. Others, whose weak limbs do not permit of their running over the hot embers, cover the upper part of the body with a wet cloth, and holding a chafing-dish filled with burning

[1] This has now been prohibited by law.—ED.

[2] 'Hook-swinging,' as this is called, is still practised in the Madura district (Madras). Though the magistracy have orders to do all they can to prevent it, by dissuading men from offering themselves as victims, still, as it is not under ordinary circumstances a criminal offence, it cannot be prevented by legal process.—ED.

coals, pour the contents over their heads. This feat of devotion is called the *Fire-bath*.

Another kind of torture consists in piercing both cheeks and passing a wire of silver or some other metal through the two jaws between the teeth. Thus bridled, the mouth cannot be opened without acute pain. Many fanatics have been known to travel a distance of twenty miles with their jaws thus maimed, and remain several days in this state, taking only liquid nourishment, or some clear broth poured into the mouth. I have seen whole companies of them, men and women, condemned by their self-inflicted torture to enforced silence, going on a pilgrimage to some temple where this form of penance is especially recommended. There are others, again, who pierce their nostrils or the skin of their throats in the same way.

I could not help shuddering one day at seeing one of these imbeciles with his lips pierced by two long nails, which crossed each other so that the point of one reached to the right eye and the point of the other to the left. I saw him thus disfigured at the gate of a temple consecrated to the cruel goddess Mari-amma. The blood was still trickling down his chin; yet the pain he must have been enduring did not prevent him from dancing and performing every kind of buffoonery before a crowd of spectators, who showed their admiration by giving him abundant alms.

There are a great many ordinary forms of penance, which elsewhere would appear more than sufficiently painful; but devout Hindus do not rest satisfied with these; they try unceasingly to invent new methods of self-torture. Thus, for example, a fanatic self-torturer makes a vow to cut half his tongue off, executes it coolly with his own hands, puts the amputated portion in an open cocoanut shell, and offers it on his knees to the divinity.

Then, again, there are others who, apparently having nothing better to do, bind themselves to go on a pilgrimage to some distant shrine by measuring their length along the ground throughout the whole distance. Beginning at their very doors, pilgrims of this description stretch themselves on the ground, rise again, advance two steps, again lie down, again rise, and continue thus till they reach their destination. Considering the length of their journeys and the fatigue of

such exercise, it is easy to imagine that the pilgrims do not go far off the route to sleep at the end of the day. Persons have been seen attempting to measure their length in this way along the entire road which runs between the sacred town of Benares and the temple of Jagannath (Puri), a distance of more than two hundred leagues. I should not like to swear, however, that they really accomplished such a feat.

This tendency of Hindus to submit their bodies to severe and often cruel tortures, or to spend their means in costly offerings, is manifested whenever they find themselves in critical circumstances, and particularly in times of sickness.

There is not a single Hindu who does not in such cases make a vow to perform something more or less onerous on condition that he is delivered safe and sound from his unfortunate predicament. The rich make vows either to celebrate solemn festivals at certain temples, or to present to the pagoda some gift, such as a cow, a buffalo, pieces of cloth or other stuffs, gold or silver ornaments, &c. If the eye, nose, ear, or any other organ be afflicted, they offer to the idols an image of it in gold or silver.

Among the numerous offerings which this superstitious mania causes to flow into the temples of the Hindu gods, there is one common enough, but which, without the perquisites which accompany it, would contribute very little to increase the wealth of the Brahmin priests. It consists in offering one's nails and hair to some divinity. It is well known that men in India are in the habit of shaving the head and leaving only a single small tuft of hair to grow on the crown. Those who make the particular vow referred to refrain, for many years together, from cutting their nails and hair. Then, at a certain fixed time, they proceed in state to the temple, and there, with great ceremony, get rid of the superfluous growth of hair and nails, which they lay at the feet of the divinity whom they wish to honour. This custom is practised only by men; it is chiefly recommended to those who believe themselves to be possessed with a devil[1].

We must do justice to the Brahmins by remarking that they are never so silly as to impose on themselves vows of self-

[1] This custom is also practised among Sudra women.—ED.

torture. They leave these pious pastimes to the stupid Sudras. And even the Sudras who practise such penances are for the most part men of low birth who do so to gain their livelihood; or else fanatical sectaries of Siva or Vishnu, actuated by religious mania, or more often by an inordinate desire of securing the applause and admiration of the public.

Apart from ordinary superstitious practices which flourish everywhere, there are certain temples which, in this respect, enjoy special privileges; such, for example, as that of Tirupati in the south of the Peninsula. This temple, which is in the Carnatic, is dedicated to Vishnu under the name of Venkateswara. Immense multitudes of pilgrims flock to it from all parts of India, bringing offerings of all sorts, in food, stuffs, gold, silver, jewels, costly cloths, horses, cows, &c., which are so considerable that they suffice to maintain several thousands of persons employed in the various offices of worship, which is there conducted with extraordinary magnificence.

Among the noticeable peculiarities which distinguish the great feasts of this temple there is one which I must not pass over in silence. At a certain time of the year a grand procession is formed, which attracts an immense crowd of persons of both sexes. While the image of Venkateswara is borne through the streets on a magnificent car, the Brahmins who preside at the ceremony go about among the crowd and select the most beautiful women they can find, demanding them of their husbands or parents in the name of Venkateswara, for whose service, it is asserted, they are destined. Those husbands who have not lost all common sense, understanding, or at least suspecting, that a god of stone has no need of wives, indignantly refuse to deliver up theirs, and bluntly speak their mind to the hypocritical rogues. The latter, far from being disconcerted, proceed to apply to others who are better disposed, for some of the men are delighted at the honour conferred upon them by so great a god in condescending to ally himself with their family, and do not hesitate to deliver their wives and even their daughters into the hands of his priests[1].

It is thus that the seraglio of Tirupati is recruited. When the god takes it into his head that some of his wives are beginning to grow old or are no longer pleasing to him, he signifies

[1] Such proceedings would hardly be tolerated in the present day.—ED.

through the priests his intention of divorcing them. A mark is branded on their thighs or breasts with a red-hot iron, representing the god Venkateswara, and they receive a certificate showing that they have faithfully served a certain number of years as legitimate wives of the god, and are therefore recommended to the charitable public. Then they are dismissed, and provided with their certificate of good conduct they go about the country under the name of *Kali-yuga-Lakshmis* (the Lakshmis[1] of *Kali-yuga*). Wherever they go their wants are abundantly supplied.

This system of procuring wives for their idols is not a peculiarity of the temple of Tirupati. The priests of many other temples have found it convenient to have recourse to it, as for instance those in charge of the temple of Jagannath, which is even more famous than the temple of Tirupati. Religious ceremonies are conducted in this temple with the greatest magnificence. It is situated near the sea on the coast of Orissa. The principal divinity worshipped there is represented under a monstrous shape without arms or head. What particularly distinguishes this pagoda is that it is a centre of union among the Hindus. Although it is specially consecrated to Vishnu, there are no distinctions between sects and castes. Everybody is admitted, and may offer worship in his own way to the presiding deity. Accordingly pilgrims resort thither from all parts of India; the disciples of Vishnu and of Siva frequenting it with equal zeal. The *Bairagis* and the *Goshais* from the North, the *Dasarus* and the *Jangamas* from the South, lay aside their mutual animosities when they approach this sacred place, and it is perhaps the only spot in India where they do so[2]. While sojourning there they seem to form but one brotherhood. It is at this temple especially that one sees the religious fanatics, of whom I have already spoken above, throwing themselves before the car of the idol and allowing themselves to be crushed beneath its wheels.

Several thousands of persons, chiefly Brahmins, are employed in the performance of the religious ceremonies of the temple. The crowd of pilgrims never abates. Those from the South who go on a pilgrimage to Kasi, or Benares, always take the

[1] Lakshmi is the name of the wife of Vishnu.—DUBOIS.

[2] Tirupati is the same in this respect. —ED.

Jagannath (Puri) road up the coast in order to offer *en route* their respectful homage to its presiding deity. Those from the North who go to the temple of Rameswaram, which is situated on a small island near Cape Comorin, also take this road[1].

I have made mention elsewhere of a tank or reservoir of sacred water which is found at Kumbakónam in Tanjore, and which possesses the virtue once in every twelve years of purifying all those who bathe in it from all spiritual and corporal infirmities and from all sins committed during many generations. When the time for this easy means of absolution draws nigh, an almost incredible number of pilgrims flock to the spot from all parts of India.

At Palni, in Madura, there is a famous temple consecrated to the god Velayuda, whose devotees bring offerings of a peculiar kind, namely large sandals, beautifully ornamented and similar in shape to those worn by the Hindus on their feet. The god is addicted to hunting, and these shoes are intended for his use when he traverses the jungles and deserts in pursuit of his favourite sport. Such shabby gifts, one might think, would go very little way towards filling the coffers of the priests of Velayuda. Nothing of the sort: Brahmins always know how to reap profit from anything. Accordingly the new sandals are rubbed on the ground and rolled a little in the dust, and are then exposed to the eyes of the pilgrims who visit the temple. It is clear enough that the sandals must have been worn on the divine feet of Velayuda; and they become the property of whosoever pays the highest price for such holy relics.

It does not enter into my calculations to offer a complete account of all the extravagant absurdities which abound in the idolatrous worship of the Hindus, or of all the tricks and subterfuges, more or less clumsy, by means of which the hypocritical and crafty priests foster the faith of the people while they increase their own comfort. A subject of this nature would be inexhaustible, and in order to treat it fully I should require many volumes. I believe I have said enough, however, to give a fairly good idea of the rest. But I must add

[1] The temple of Jagannath being one of the most celebrated in India, I have given in Appendix VI some details about the myths and traditions relating to its origin.—DUBOIS.

a few words concerning the religious processions of the Hindus, which in their eyes are a matter of no small importance.

There is not a single temple of any note which has not one or two processions every year. On such occasions the idols are placed on huge massive cars supported on four large solid wheels, not made, like our wheels, with spokes and felloes. A big beam serves as the axle, and supports the car proper, which is sometimes fifty feet in height. The thick blocks which form the base are carved with images of men and women in the most indecent attitudes. Several stages of carved planking are raised upon this basement, gradually diminishing in width until the whole fabric has the form of a pyramid.

On the days of procession the car is adorned with coloured calicoes, costly cloths, green foliage, garlands of flowers, &c. The idol, clothed in the richest apparel and adorned with its most precious jewels, is placed in the middle of the car, beneath an elegant canopy. Thick cables are attached to the car, and sometimes more than a thousand persons are harnessed to it. A party of dancing-girls are seated on the car and surround the idol. Some of them fan the idol with fans made of peacocks' feathers; others wave yâk tails gracefully from side to side. Many other persons are also mounted on the car for the purpose of directing its movements and inciting the multitude that drags it to continued efforts. All this is done in the midst of tremendous tumult and confusion. In the crowd following the procession men and women are indiscriminately mixed up, and liberties may be taken without entailing any consequences. Decency and modesty are at a discount during car festivals. I have been told that it is common enough for clandestine lovers, who at other times are subject to vexatious suspicion, to choose the day of procession for their rendezvous in order to gratify their desires without restraint.

The procession advances slowly. From time to time a halt is made, during which a most frightful uproar of shouts and cries and whistlings is kept up. The courtesans, who are present in great numbers on these solemn occasions, perform obscene dances; while, as long as the procession continues, the drums, trumpets, and all sorts of musical instruments give forth their discordant sounds. On one side sham combatants armed with naked sabres are to be seen fencing with one another;

on another side, one sees men dancing in groups and beating time with small sticks; and somewhere else people are seen wrestling. Finally, a great number of devotees crawl slowly before the car on hands and knees. Those who have nothing else to do shriek and shout so that even the thunder of the great Indra striking the giants would not be heard by them. But in order to form a proper idea of the terrible uproar and confusion that reigns among this crowd of demoniacs one must witness such a scene. As for myself, I never see a Hindu procession without being reminded of a picture of hell.

The above is only a slight sketch of the religious ceremonies of the Hindus. Such is the spirit of piety which animates them! Whatever may have been the shameful mysteries, the revolting extravagances of paganism, could any religion be filled with more insane, ignoble, obscene, and even cruel practices?

It is true that human sacrifices are no longer openly tolerated in India. But what matters it? If the female victim does not fall under the sword of the sacrificer, she is so misled by the perfidious suggestions of the priests that she perishes of her own free will and accord on the funeral pyre, or, what is more horrible, by the very hands of those who have given her existence! Are not they also human victims, those unhappy widows on whom superstition has imposed the obligation of burning themselves alive? And what name shall we apply to the destruction of a number of innocent girls condemned to death at their very birth?

These self-same Brahmins, who are afraid of breaking an egg for fear of destroying the germ of a chicken, have they ever expressed the slightest indignation when they have seen parents, more ferocious than tigers, sacrificing all their daughters and preserving only their sons[1]?

[1] This execrable custom is prevalent among certain castes of Rajputs and Jats in the North of India. Happily, the efforts made by the Government nowadays to extirpate it have succeeded in making these infanticides less frequent.—DUBOIS.

The Census Report for 1891 states: 'It is pretty certain that the deliberate putting to death of female infants is a practice that in the present day, at all events, is confined to exceedingly narrow limits. . . . On the whole, even in Rajputana, the Census returns show that the practice must be very restricted in its operation. . . . But

Others, again, with feelings no less unnatural, either drown or expose to wild beasts children who happen to be born under unlucky stars. Furthermore, have they ever, these Brahmins, represented to the people over whom they exercise such paramount influence, how shamelessly they violate nature by placing the sick, whose recovery is despaired of, on the banks of the Ganges, or of some other so-called holy river, so that they may be drowned by the floods or devoured by crocodiles? Have they ever attempted to restrain the frenzy of those fanatics who, in their mistaken devotion, foolishly allow themselves to be crushed under the wheels of the cars of their idols, or throw themselves headlong into the stream at the junction of the Ganges and the Jumna[1]?

What a consoling contrast does the sublime religion of Jesus Christ offer to him who knows how to appreciate its blessings! How inestimable do its holy precepts, its sweet and pure morality, appear in comparison with the hideous and degraded doctrines which I have here so reluctantly sketched! Of a truth, it is God Himself who has not permitted His Divine attributes to be attached to a false religion.

But some will say that the iniquities which have roused my indignation are due far more to vicious conditions of civilization than to perversity of religious principle. But I may reply, what is then the object of true religion, if it is not to correct such vices? The priests of a religion who advise, encourage, or permit crimes to be committed which they could prevent, take upon themselves the whole responsibility for the evil. And in this the modern Brahmins are so much the more to blame because they have done their best to distort and render unrecognizable the primitive religion of which they constituted themselves the guardians, and which, however imperfect it may have been, was far from possessing the monstrous character which it acquired later in the hands of its avaricious and hypocritical interpreters. The Hindu system of religion is nothing more than a lever of which the Brahmins make use habitually for influencing the passions of a credulous people, and turning them to their own advantage. Instead of bending

many a girl is allowed to die unattended where medical aid would be at once called in if the son were attacked.'—ED.

[1] Attempts at suicide are now punishable by law.—ED.

the moral character of the nation under the yoke of the primitive creed, they have invented a sham religion suited to the natural propensities of the people. Quick to recognize the special predilections of their fellow-countrymen, they know that everything which is strange and extraordinary, everything which exceeds the bounds of reason, is calculated to please them; and they have omitted no opportunity of using this knowledge to their own profit.

It must be confessed that the imagination of the Hindus is such that it cannot be excited except by what is monstrous and extravagant. Ordinary objects produce not the slightest impression upon their blunted intellects; it needs giants or pygmies to attract their attention. However little one may be acquainted with them, it is easy to convince oneself of this truism. If you attempt to amuse or instruct them, they will listen to you with distracted indifference unless you intermingle with your discourse some extravagant story, some absurd fable, or some fiction that would overturn the whole economy of the universe. During the conversations which I have frequently held with Brahmins on the subject of religion, if I spoke to them of miracles wrought by the power of God, they saw nothing extraordinary in them. If I related to them the exploits of Joshua and his army and the wonders they performed through the intervention of God in the conquest of the land of Canaan, they would reply with an air of triumph by citing the prowess of their Rama, and the wonders, marvellous in quite another fashion, which attended his conquest of the island of Ceylon. According to them, Samson had no more strength than a child as compared with Bali, Ravana, and other giants. The resurrection of Lazarus was, in their opinion, quite unworthy of remark; for, they said, the Vishnavites daily perform similar miracles during the ceremony of *pavadam*.

What conclusion must be drawn from all this? It is that a wise and reasonable religious belief cannot be evolved by human agency alone. God alone is the Supreme Lawgiver. God alone can interpret His mysterious will to His Prophets and His Church. Without His grace reason is at fault, and is lost in the uncertainty of idle imaginings. False teachers of idolatry may invent dogmas and systems, but they can never reconcile them or build upon them any stable structure of religion.

If, for inscrutable reasons, which it is not given to us to know, God has not been pleased to reveal Himself till now to a people whose civilization dates back to the darkest ages, we at any rate should congratulate ourselves on having been chosen as the objects of His favour.

Many Europeans who visit India are struck by the incoherency of ideas that prevails in the religion professed by its inhabitants, and by the variety of its doctrines and ceremonies; and being far from robust in their own faith, they end by endorsing one of the favourite axioms of modern philosophy, namely, that 'all religions are equally agreeable to God and lead to the same good end.' But to me the strange and disquieting picture of Hindu religion has always presented itself in quite a different aspect. The sight of such an extraordinary religious cult, far from shaking my faith, has on the contrary greatly contributed to confirm it [1].

Certainly, every time that I compare the grand simplicity of our Holy Scriptures, the sublime teachings of our Gospel, the solemn splendour of our religious services, with the inconsistent and disgusting myths contained in the Hindu Puranas and with the extravagant, barbarous, and often terrible religious ceremonies to which the Hindus are addicted, I cannot help feeling that the Christian religion shines with new splendour. I cannot help experiencing an irresistible feeling of gratitude for the blessing of having been born in a part of the globe to which God's divine light has penetrated. It is then that I echo the words of the holy Lawgiver of the Hebrews contained in Deuteronomy iv. 8. Some so-called philosophers of modern times have maintained that the mind of man alone is able to conceive

[1] A Tartar king, recently converted, having communicated to Louis IX his intention of prostrating himself at the feet of the Pope, who was then at Lyons, the saintly monarch dissuaded him, for fear that the dissolute manners of the Christians might weaken the belief of this stranger in the sanctity of the Catholic religion. This precaution was no doubt wise. Nevertheless, another traveller, who was a witness of the immorality of the Roman people, felt his faith strengthened, and came to the conclusion that there could be only one true religion that could be upheld by God's omnipotence amidst such terrible corruption. For my part, I cannot conceive how any Christian can consistently ignore his religious duties when he becomes closely acquainted with an idolatrous people and with the perverse infatuation and extravagant unreasonableness which distinguish an idolatrous cult.—DUBOIS.

a just notion of the divinity. They have dared to attribute that which they themselves have conceived it to be to the efforts of their own critical faculties, as if this power itself had not been imprinted on their minds in the first instance by the Christian education which they received in early youth.

Where, indeed, are there to be found any philosophers, ancient or modern, who have arrived without the assistance of Revelation at trustworthy notions of God and of the worship due to Him? Socrates, the most renowned of all, spoke of the Supreme Being in a manner worthy of Him. Yet even he was unable to shake off entirely the fetters of pagan superstition. After drinking the cup of hemlock and addressing to his friends a sublime discourse upon the immortality of the soul, he again returned to the vain imaginings of pagan worship, and addressing Crito, told him he had vowed the sacrifice of a cock to Aesculapius and begged him to accomplish this vow on his behalf.

The Hindus, like all idolatrous nations, originally possessed a conception, imperfect though it was, of the true God; but this knowledge, deprived of the light of Revelation, grew more and more dim, until at last it became extinguished in the darkness of error, of ignorance, and of corruption. Confounding the Creator with His creatures, they set up gods who were merely myths and monstrosities, and to them they addressed their prayers and directed their worship, both of which were as false as the attributes which they assigned to these divinities.

Nevertheless, such is the moral obliquity of this people that nothing even to this day has been capable of shaking their faith in their idols, or of persuading them to believe in the more reasonable religion of their conquerors. The Christians have vainly endeavoured to introduce their creed by persuasion. And if the Mahomedans have succeeded in making a fairly large number of proselytes, it is only by employing here as elsewhere bribery or violence. But in spite of the honours and dignities offered by the latter to those who, renouncing their national religion, embraced the Moslem faith, Mahomedan missionaries have obtained only partial success and Mahomedanism has not become predominant in any single province of India.

The Christian religion, to which Europe owes its civilization—

that blessed and humane religion, so well adapted to alleviate and improve the condition of a wretched people crushed under the yoke of oppression: that religion whose manifest truths have softened the hard hearts of so many barbarous nations—has been preached without success to the Hindus for more than three hundred years. It is even losing day by day the little ground which it had once gained, against a thousand obstacles, through the zeal and persevering efforts of many virtuous and zealous missionaries. The seed sown by them has, in fact, fallen on stony ground. It must be acknowledged that the conduct of the Europeans who have been brought up in the profession of Christianity, and who are now to be found all over India, is too often unworthy of the faith which they are supposed to profess; and this scandalous state of affairs, which the natives of India can in no way explain, is a powerful factor in increasing the dislike of the latter for a religion which apparently its own followers do not themselves respect.

As a matter of course, the taint of corruption which characterizes all the religious institutions of the Hindus has duly left its mark on their social morality. How, indeed, could virtue prevail in a country where all the vices of mankind are justified by those of their gods? It naturally follows that their religion and their morality are equally corrupt, and this confirms in a certain sense the reflection of Montesquieu, that, 'in a country which has the misfortune to possess a religion that does not proceed from God, it necessarily follows that the religion is identical with the system of morality which prevails there, because religion, even when it is false, is the best guarantee that men can have of the honesty of other men.'

Some few articles of the Hindu faith, if freed from the absurd trammels with which Brahmin deceit has surrounded them, would be capable of offering successful resistance to the inroads of corrupt influences. For instance, the fear of the punishments reserved for the wicked in hell, the hope of the reward apportioned to the blessed in the Abodes of Bliss, and even the strange doctrine of metempsychosis which grants to the man who is neither altogether virtuous nor altogether vicious the prospect of a new birth more or less advantageous and proportionate to his deeds, would be so many incentives, which, if inculcated in the minds of the people by disinterested

teachers and men of good faith, would contribute powerfully towards bringing them back into the paths of righteousness. But how different is this way of looking at things from that of the Brahmins! The punishments of hell, exclusion from the Abodes of Bliss, and regenerations in vile bodies are reserved only for those who have done some injury to these hypocritical and selfish persons, or who have not helped to enrich them. Robbers, liars, murderers—indeed the greatest criminals—are sure of immunity after death, provided they give presents to the Brahmins, or contribute in some way to their worldly comfort.

The only real good which the Hindu religion does is to unite in one body under its banner the various castes and tribes of India, the differences between which are such as would otherwise constitute them, so to speak, different nations. Without this common tie it may reasonably be presumed that only disorder and anarchy would prevail.

It is quite true, therefore, that a religion, however bad and absurd it may be, is still preferable to the absence of any religion at all. Unquestionably, in my opinion, the worshipper of the *Trimurti* is much less contemptible than the free-thinker who presumes to deny the existence of God[1]. A Hindu who professes the doctrine of metempsychosis proves that he has infinitely more common sense than those vain philosophers who utilize all their logic in proving that they are merely brute beasts, and that 'death is merely an eternal sleep' for the reasoning man as well as for the animal which cannot reason. But whatever I might say on this subject could in no way excel the logical conclusions which I might quote from Montesquieu, who refutes a paradox expressed by a man more celebrated for his genius than for the purity of his religious principles[2].

And I may fitly terminate these remarks by drawing attention to the testimony of Voltaire, a man whom nobody can accuse of too much partiality in the matter of religion[3].

[1] I say '*who presumes*,' because there cannot be an atheist by conviction. This would mean a man who, by making use of the reason which he can obtain only from God, concludes that there is no God; a conclusion which is evidently contradictory. Only a fool, then, can be an atheist. '*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*'—DUBOIS.

[2] *Esprit des Lois*, XXIV. 2.

[3] *Traité de la Tolérance*, XX.

CHAPTER V

The Principal Gods of the Hindus.—Brahma.—Vishnu.—Rama.—Krishna.—Siva.—The *Lingam*.—Vigneshwara.—Indra.—The Abodes of Bliss of these Different Gods.—*Swarga*.—*Kailasa*.—*Vaikuntha*.—*Sattya-loka*.

SURELY no one will expect me to relate here the histories of all the inferior deities which swarm in Hindu mythology; a mere catalogue of them would fill a large volume; and much more numerous still are the strange stories that Hindu legends contain about them. Only the gods of the first order, *di majorum gentium*, can find a place here. Among those of the highest rank are first of all Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. Sometimes, under the name of the *Trimurti*, these three gods receive the homage of their devotees in common; at other times each one is the object of particular worship. From these again have sprung a multitude of others, whom the Hindus, faithful to their practice of exaggeration, reckon up to the astounding total of three hundred and thirty millions. I will only refer to the most renowned of these, and I believe that my readers will thank me for sparing them the greater part of the foolish and disgusting details which the people of India attach to these gods, and which amount with them to articles of faith. Let us begin with the deity occupying the first rank in this extensive hierarchy.

BRAHMA[1].

According to tradition, Brahma issued originally from a *tama-*

1 'The more common name for the one Spirit is Atman or Paramatman, and in the later system, *Brahman*, neut. (nom. Brahmā), derived from root *brih*, "to expand," and denoting the universally expanding essence or universally diffused substance of the universe. It was thus that the later creed became not so much monotheistic (by which I mean the belief in one

rasa[1] flower. He was born with five heads; but he outraged Parvati, the wife of Siva, and Siva avenged himself by striking off one of the heads of the adulterous god in single combat. Consequently, Brahma is now represented with only four heads, and he is often called the *four-faced god.*

He rides on a swan, and his emblem is a water-lily. His own daughter, Sarasvati, is his wife. Having conceived for her an incestuous passion, and not daring to satisfy it under the human form, he assumed that of a stag, and changed his daughter into a hind. It is for having thus violated the laws of nature that he has, so they say, neither temple nor worship nor sacrifice. Some Pundits maintain, however, that the feeling of indifference evinced towards Brahma is caused by the malediction cast upon him by a certain penitent named Bunumi, who, on presenting himself for admission to the Abode of Bliss, was received with irreverence by the god. But whatever may be the motive, it is an accepted fact that Brahma does not anywhere receive public worship.

They allow him, however, three attributes of high importance: for he is (1) the author and creator of all things; (2) the dispenser of all gifts and favours; (3) the sovereign disposer of the destiny of man.

At the creation of mankind the Brahmins, the most noble of all men, sprang from his head, as I have stated elsewhere; the Kshatriyas issued from his shoulders, the Vaisyas from his stomach, the Sudras from his feet. This, at any rate, is the version most commonly recognized; but it is denied by some authors, who say that Brahma created a first man, who was the father of all the rest. Brahma made him first of all with only

God, regarded as a Personal Being external to the universe, though creating and governing it) as pantheistic; Brahman in the neuter being "simple infinite being"—the only real eternal essence—which, when it passes into universal *manifested* existence, is called Brahma, when it manifests itself on the earth, is called Vishnu, and when it again dissolves itself into simple being, is called Siva; all the other innumerable gods and demigods being also mere manifestations of the neuter Brahman, who alone is eternal. This, at any rate, appears to be the genuine pantheistic creed of India at the present day.'—MONIER-WILLIAMS.

[1] A species of lotus, or water-lily, *Nymphaea lotus*. It is well known how greatly this plant, which grows extensively in Egypt, in the canals that serve to conduct the waters of the Nile for watering and fertilizing the land, was held in veneration by the ancient Egyptians.—DUBOIS.

one foot; but seeing that he had difficulty in moving about in this form, Brahma destroyed his work, and made another with three feet: at last, perceiving that this third foot was like a fifth wheel to a coach, Brahma began his labour over again, and made man with two feet.

It is through Brahma in his quality of supreme disposer that the other gods, the giants, and certain other privileged creatures, have obtained the privileges and prerogatives which they enjoy. Brahma can even confer immortality, as he has done in the case of some famous personages, such as the giants Ravana, Hirannya, and several others.

By reason of the sovereignty which Brahma exercises over the destinies of mankind, all men are born with their fates written on their foreheads by the hand of the god himself. This destiny is absolute and irrevocable. It embraces five principal objects, namely, length of life, disposition, intelligence, worldly condition, and virtuous or vicious inclination. What Brahma has predestined in all these is inevitable and must be strictly fulfilled. The Hindus are so fully convinced of this that in all adversities and troubles of life they are heard to exclaim: *Thus was it written on my forehead*! If they are called upon to sympathize in the troubles of relative or friend, they never omit to utter this consolatory saying: *No being can escape that which is written on his forehead*! Thus, in all cases where a Christian would exclaim with humble resignation, *God's will be done*, they say with an equal resignation, *What is written on the forehead must be fulfilled.* It is also upon this irrevocable and irresistible destiny that Hindus lay the faults and crimes committed by them. Instances of this are constantly occurring in the European courts of justice now established in the country. Thus, when judges ask criminals what has brought them to commit the crimes for which they are convicted, they invariably respond, *Thus it was written on my forehead, and it was not in my power to avoid it*[1].

Each man is also endowed with one of the three qualities of which mention has been made before, namely, goodness or truth (*satva*), passion (*rajas*), ignorance (*tamas*). Whichever of these

1 This was the excuse offered by a Hindu who was recently (1896) charged with the murder of his mistress at the Mazagon Police Court, Bombay, for the sake of her jewels. —ED.

qualities has fallen to a man's lot is inherent in his being, and is in conformity with his deeds in previous existences; it influences him in all the actions of his life.

This doctrine of fate or destiny was recognized in heathen antiquity from the earliest times. It was the subject of speculation among Greek and Roman philosophers; and, as we all know, there are philosophers of modern times who have felt no shame in adopting it. However, the wisest of the Greek and Roman philosophers correctly gauged the consequences of attributing such an influence to destiny, an influence which, by depriving men of all liberty, destroys both virtue and vice, and constitutes God the Author of all crime. In other terms, that is to say, it disturbs the basis of all morality and of all religion.

VISHNU.

One of the commonest names of Vishnu in the southern part of the Peninsula is Perumal. His devotees are fond of invoking him under the name of Narayana; and he has a thousand other names, of which the Brahmins have composed a species of litany which they call *Hari-smarana*.

I have said elsewhere, concerning the worship rendered to Vishnu, that the sign of the *namam*, which his followers trace on their forehead, is the distinctive symbol of that worship. His cult is more general than that of Siva, especially among the Brahmins, whose favourite god appears to be Vishnu.

He is represented with four arms, and hence is sometimes named the *four-armed god*. The bird *garuda* is his vehicle. He bears the title of redeemer and preserver of all that exists. The other gods, not excepting Brahma himself, have often had need of his help in escaping from perils which threatened them. In his quality of preserver he has found himself obliged to take different forms, which the Hindus designate under the name of *Avatars* (incarnations). Of these they count ten principal ones, the nomenclature of which is contained in the following verses:—

> *Adau matsyas tatah kurma Varahascha param tatah*
> *Narasimha maha saktir vamanascha param tatah*
> *Ramascha Balaramascha parasustadanantaram*
> *Kalkirupascha baudhascha hyavatara dasa smitah.*

1. *Matsya-avatar*, in the form of a fish;
2. *Varaha-avatar*, in the form of a pig;
3. *Kurma-avatar*, in the form of a tortoise;
4. *Narasimha-avatar*, in the form of a monster, half man and half lion.
5. *Vamana-avatar*, in the form of a Brahmin dwarf, named Vamana;
6. *Parasurama-avatar*, in the form of Parasurama;
7. *Rama-avatar*, in the form of the famous hero known as Rama;
8. In the form of Bala-rama;
9. *Bouddha-avatar*, in the form of Buddha;
10. *Kalki-avatar*, in the form of a horse.

There is yet another famous incarnation, which is that of Vishnu in the person of Krishna, without counting many others; and all these, if I am not mistaken, originally possessed an allegorical meaning, the object being to prove the all-pervading presence of the divinity. For instance, one reads in the *Bhagavata*:

One day, the penitent Arjuna having invoked Vishnu with fervour and devotion, and having prayed him to reveal himself to him, this powerful god, who has deigned to manifest himself to man under all kinds of forms, answered him thus: 'These, Arjuna, are the forms in which thou must above all invoke me, acknowledging them as part of my divine essence:—

'In prayer, I am the *Gayatri*.

'In speech, I am the word *Aum*.

'Among the gods, I am *Indra*.

'Among the stars, I am the *Sun*.

'Among the hills, I am *Mount Meru*.

'Among the Rudras, I am *Sankara*.

'Among the rich, I am *Kubhera*.

'Among the elements, I am *Fire*.

'Among the *purohitas*, I am *Bruhaspati*.

'Among the generals of armies, I am *Kartika*.

'Among the penitents, I am *Bhrigu*.

'Among the sages, I am *Kapila-Muni*.

'Among the Gandharvas, I am *Chitrarata*.

'Among the weapons, I am the *Thunderbolt*.

'Among the birds, I am the *Garuda*.

'Among the elephants, I am *Airavata*.
'Among the cows, I am *Surabhi*.
'Among the monkeys, I am *Hanuman*.
'Among the serpents, I am *Ananta*.
'Among the waters, I am the *Sea*.
'Among the rivers, I am the *Ganges*.
'Among the trees, I am the *Aswatta*.
'Among the shrubs, I am the *Tulasi*.
'Among the grasses, I am the *Darbha*.
'Among the stones, I am the *Salagrama*.
'Among the giants, I am *Prahlada*.
'Among the months, I am *Margasirsha*.
'Among the learned books, I am the *Sama-Veda*.
'In short, I am the spirit of all that exists; I permeate the universe.'

The *Kalki-avatar*, or horse incarnation, has not yet occurred, but it is expected, although the time and place where it will happen are not known. It will put an end to the kingdom of sin, which began with the *Kali-yuga*.

Vishnu will then appear in the form of a horse; he will be of gigantic stature; he will be armed with a huge axe; his voice will resemble the rolling of thunder, the noise of which will spread terror everywhere. First he will destroy all kings, then all other men. Finally, seeing that his father and mother are but sinners like the rest of mankind, he will sacrifice them also to appease his anger. After this a New Age will begin, when virtue and happiness will reign on the earth.

If one may believe certain learned Brahmins whom I have had an opportunity of consulting on this subject, it would appear that the incarnation of Buddha has also not yet taken place. It ought to have occurred at the beginning of the *Kali-yuga* in the country called Kitoki. This Buddha will preach pure atheism to mankind: he will lead even the gods themselves into sin and error. In these unhappy times Sudras will be seen wearing red cloths, a colour which is only meet for Brahmins, and acquiring knowledge, the Vedas not excepted. So little virtue will then be practised on the earth that what there is will not suffice to render man happy in this world or the next. The Brahmins will no longer fulfil the duties of their calling, will hold in no esteem the rules concerning defilement and cleanliness.

Children will no longer obey their parents; there will be no more caste distinctions; even kings will practise all that is most vile and contemptible among men. Earth itself and the other elements will feel the effects of the universal disorder which will then prevail in nature; the former will lose, at any rate partially, its fertility; little rain will fall from the clouds; the cows will yield but little milk, and that, moreover, will not be fit for making butter.

In the opinion of most Brahmins, however, the *Avatar* in question has already taken place. They cannot exactly fix its date, but they maintain that it is this *Avatar* which put an end to the bloody sacrifices formerly in vogue.

It is probable the same epoch witnessed the establishment of Buddhism, which prevails throughout the greater part of Asia, but has been almost entirely destroyed by the Brahmins in India. Be this as it may, it is certain that under this *Avatar* the Brahmins render no homage to Buddha or to Vishnu.

I must mention in conclusion the famous incarnation of Vishnu in the person of Rama, which forms the subject of the celebrated epic poem known as the *Ramayana*, the most famous of all Indian books, and read by persons of all castes.

RAMA.

Rama, or the incarnation of Vishnu under this name, was the son of Dasaradha, King of Ayodhya or Ayodhi [1]; his mother was Kousalya. He spent the first years of his life in the jungles under the guidance of the penitent Gautama [2]. It was there that, touching with his feet Ahalya, who had previously been turned into stone by a penitent's curse [3], he restored her to life and to her original form.

Subsequently he went to the court of Janaka, King of Mithila. This prince, having witnessed several of his deeds of prowess, proposed to him that he should break the bow of Siva, which until then none of the kings of the earth had been able to do. Rama accomplished this task with ease, and won Sita,

[1] Ayodhya literally means 'unconquerable.'—ED.

[2] The name of the penitent is not Gautama, but Viswamitra.—ED.

[3] It was Gautama, the husband of Ahalya, who was the penitent in this case.—ED.

daughter of the King of Mithila, as the reward of his strength and valour. Hardly had the marriage been celebrated when Rama's father recalled him, and entrusted him with the reins of government. After returning to his paternal home he was one day practising with his bow, and shot an arrow with such force that its twang as it left the bow caused an abortion in a Brahmin woman who was present. The husband, in a transport of rage, uttered this curse:—'May Rama henceforth possess no more knowledge than the rest of men!' The curse had its effect, and from that time Rama was deprived of the divine knowledge inherent in him. Shortly after this event, Kaikeyi, the fourth wife of Dasaradha, earnestly desiring to obtain the crown for her own son, visited Rama and implored him with the most urgent entreaties to forgo his claims. This Rama consented to do, and after abdicating he retired once more into the jungles, accompanied by his brother Lakshmana and his wife Sita.

One day, while Rama was afar off in the forests, Lakshmana cut off the ears of Surpanakha, sister of the ten-headed giant Ravana, King of Lankah (Ceylon), who, indignant at the insult offered to his sister, avenged himself by carrying off Sita. Rama, learning on his return of the misfortune which had befallen him in his absence, was prostrated with grief, and could think of nothing but the means of rescuing his beloved Sita from the clutches of her ravisher. In order to succeed in his design, he began by making an alliance with Sugriva[1], king of the monkeys, to whom he rendered great service by killing Vali, his brother, who had long contested the empire with him and was then in possession of it.

Impatient for news of his wife, Rama determined to send some one to Lankah without further delay, to obtain information. The undertaking was not easy, as there was an arm of the sea to cross. But Hanuman, son of the Wind and commander-in-chief of the army of monkeys, whom Sugriva had sent to help his ally Rama, was endowed with extraordinary agility, which seemed to render him the most appropriate person for such an embassy. He was therefore appointed to the task. He started, crossed the straits, walking dry-shod over the surface of the waters, and arrived at Lankah. After a long and unsuccessful

[1] Sugriva literally means 'beautiful necked.'—ED.

search, Hanuman at last discovered Sita sitting in a solitary spot under a shady tree, plunged in the deepest grief, and watering the ground with her tears, while her sobs alternated with curses at her sad fate. At one time she would load Ravana with maledictions, at another she would utter the most poignant regrets at the separation from her beloved Rama, to whom she swore inviolable fidelity, whatever efforts her treacherous ravisher might employ to seduce her.

Hanuman hurried back and told Rama all he had seen and heard. Rama at once conceived the idea of constructing a dam across the straits to make a passage for his army. The monkey Hanuman, entrusted with this great undertaking, set to work to uproot mountains and rocks. At each journey to the straits he carried as many stones as he had hairs on his body, and piling them up on one another, had soon achieved his task of joining the island of Lankah to the continent.

Rama, however, thinking himself hardly strong enough to attack his formidable enemy with the army of monkeys, formed a second army of bears, and with this reinforcement he prepared to cross the straits. Before setting out he placed a *lingam* on the dam, and offered a solemn sacrifice to it. Then, turning towards his armies of bears and monkeys, he addressed them as follows:—

'Brave soldiers, do not let yourselves be frightened by the giants against whom you are to wage war; their strength is useless, since the gods are not on their side. Let us advance, then, without fear and without delay. We march to certain victory, since we go to fight the enemies of the gods.'

At these words the whole force moved forward, crossed the straits, invaded Lankah, engaged in several battles with the giant Ravana, and after many vicissitudes of victory and defeat at last gained the upper hand for Rama. Ravana was vanquished and killed; and Sita, the cause of this terrible war, was rescued and carried off in triumph to her own country of Ayodhya.

On leaving Lankah, Rama placed on the vacant throne Vibhishana, Ravana's eldest brother[1], in recognition of the great services which he had rendered during the war, and before

[1] Vibhishana was a younger brother of Ravana. He was a noble-minded *rakshasa*, or giant, unlike the other giants.—ED.

departing promised he should wear the crown as long as the world lasted, that is, as long as the name of Rama should exist.

Some time after his return to Ayodhya, Rama, having one night left his palace in disguise to find out what was doing in the city, overheard at a street corner some words uttered by a washerman quarrelling with his wife, of whose faithfulness he seemed to have conceived strong suspicions. In his anger the washerman declared that he would drive her from his house, telling her that he was not the man to keep a wife—*as Rama did*—who had been in the power of another. These words fell like a thunderbolt on Rama, who, full of rage and grief, hastened back to his palace. He at once sent for his brother Lakshmana, told him what he had heard, and ordered him to seize Sita, take her far away into the jungles, and put her to death.

Lakshmana immediately set about executing his brother's orders. However, as Sita was far advanced in pregnancy, he had scruples about killing her in this condition, and resolved to save her life. The difficulty was to invent some stratagem in order to persuade Rama that he had executed the task entrusted to him. Now it happened that in the jungles to which Sita had been taken there were several trees which, as soon as an incision was made in the bark, emitted a juice the colour of blood. Lakshmana accordingly bent his bow, and taking the arrow which had been destined to pierce Sita's heart, shot it into one of these trees, staining it with the juice, and then abandoned Sita to her unhappy fate. He at once returned and announced to Rama that his vengeance had been satisfied, and for proof of it showed him the arrow stained with Sita's blood[1].

Alone and abandoned in this deserted place, poor Sita proclaimed her despair in mournful cries and torrents of tears. It happened that Vasishta the penitent had made his dwelling-place not far off[2]. Attracted by the weeping and wailing which struck his ear, he approached Sita, and asked her who she was and what was the cause of her trouble. The unfortunate woman

[1] In memory of this event it is customary on the last day of the military feast of the *Dasara* for princes to go with great ceremony into the open country and there shoot off arrows.—DUBOIS.

[2] It was not Vasishta, but Valmiki, the author of the *Ramayana*.—ED.

thereupon stopped her sobs, and, assuming an air of dignity which filled the penitent with respectful fear, answered him thus: 'I am Sita! The king Janaka is my father, the Earth is my mother, and Rama is my husband.'

At these words the penitent, filled with the most profound feelings of veneration, prostrated himself before the goddess; then, rising and clasping his hands, he said to her—

'Illustrious goddess, why give yourself up thus to grief and despair? Have you forgotten that you are the queen and mistress of the world, and that on you the salvation of all creatures depends?'

He spoke a few more words of consolation, and then led her to his hermitage, where he offered sacrifices to her.

A few days afterwards Sita brought forth twins, which the penitent Vasishta[1] reared with as much care as if they had been his own children.

Now it came to pass subsequently that Rama resolved to perform the great sacrifice of *yagnam*, and let loose the horse which was intended for the victim. The animal, after passing through many countries, came to the place where the two sons of Sita dwelt; and they, full of strength and courage, though at that time only five years of age, intercepted and stopped him.

The monkey Hanuman, general of Rama's armies, was accordingly sent with a considerable force to fight against the sons of Sita and to recover the horse; but Hanuman was vanquished by them, and compelled to seek safety in flight.

Rama, at the news of this disaster, placed himself at the head of his whole forces, and went in person to attack his new enemies. But he in his turn was defeated by the sons of Sita, and he and his soldiers were cut to pieces, not one escaping. Vasishta[1] was informed of this occurrence, and proceeded to the field of battle, which he found literally strewn with the dead. Touched with compassion for Rama and his troops, he pronounced over them the *mantram* which restores life, and raised them all from the dead.

Rama returned home, and determined to perform once more the great sacrifice of the *yagnam*, to which he invited all the neighbouring kings and all the illustrious Brahmins of the country. But the latter, on being consulted as to the best

[1] See note 2 on p. 628.

means of making the sacrifice complete, answered that it could not be so unless Rama's wife was beside him. After raising many difficulties, Rama at last consented to recall her, and to all appearances gave her a hearty welcome. Consequently the sacrifice of the horse was a complete success. But Rama thereupon wished to repudiate his wife anew, and to send her back to the jungles. All the kings present interceded in her behalf. Still Rama would not yield to their entreaties, except on the condition that she proved, by subjecting herself to the ordeal of fire, that her virtue had not suffered any taint.

Sita, conscious of her innocence, issued from the ordeal with honour and glory, and from many others not less searching; yet, in spite of all, she could not cure her husband of his odious suspicions and unjust jealousy.

Overwhelmed at last with confusion and shame, she burst into a flood of tears, and in the extremity of her despair she addressed the following prayer to her mother:—

'O Earth! thou to whom I owe my existence, justify me this day in the sight of the universe; and if it is true that I have never ceased to be a virtuous woman, accord me an indisputable proof of my chastity by opening thyself under my feet and swallowing me up!'

No sooner had she uttered these words than the Earth, in response to her prayer, opened and swallowed her up alive within her bosom.

Rama did not tarry long before following his spouse. Having divided his kingdom between his two sons, he retired to the banks of the Ganges, where he lived for some time in retirement and penance, and then closed his mortal career.

KRISHNA.

The history of Krishna, or of Vishnu under this name, is told in many Puranas. The eighteenth, the *Bhagavata*, deals with him almost exclusively. I will give a very short analysis of this.

In the Jambu-Dwipa is a country called Bharata-Varsha. In this country is *Brinda-Vana*, or paradise of Krishna, which is the supreme paradise, where untold delights are to be enjoyed. It is larger than *Swarga*, and the beauty of it is beyond all description.

It is inhabited by an infinite number of shepherds, the chief of whom is Nanda, Krishna's foster-father. On the north of *Brinda-Vana* is the town of Mathura[1], where Ugrasena reigned. He was expelled from his kingdom by his son Kamsa, who seized the throne and indulged for a long while in innumerable acts of injustice and unheard-of cruelty.

The Earth, unable to bear this tyrant's violence any longer, took the form of a cow, went in search of the four-faced Brahma, and having done him homage, spoke as follows:—

'O Creator of all things, it is to you that I owe my being; it is your duty therefore to protect me. The king Kamsa, who has given himself up altogether to sin, holds me in the most cruel oppression. I can bear his tyranny no longer. This wicked man is your creature. Therefore issue orders to him and forbid his injuring me further.'

Brahma, angered at this report, went with the supplicant to Siva, and told him what he had learnt. All these next went together to Vishnu, the Supreme Being; and after they had offered their respectful salutations, the cow—that is, the Earth still in this form—spoke thus:—

'Great god, you always listen graciously to the prayers addressed to you. I come, then, in my unhappiness to implore your protection. Kamsa, the cruel Kamsa, is committing the most unheard-of cruelties against me. I prostrate myself at your feet, and beg of you to put an end to them by slaying this evildoer.'

After listening to these complaints, Vishnu asked Brahma whether he had not formerly granted some special favour to this Kamsa, and what was its nature.

'The favour which I granted him,' answered Brahma, 'is that he can only be deprived of life by his own nephew. Enter, therefore, into the womb of Devaki, his sister; for there is no other way of getting rid of this tyrant.'

So Vishnu followed Brahma's advice, and became incarnate in the womb of Devaki, sister of Kamsa and wife of Vassu-Deva, one of the most celebrated merchants of the country.

Kamsa, on learning all that was going on, placed guards and spies everywhere, thrust Vassu-Deva and his wife into close confinement, and loaded them with fetters. However, Devaki

[1] The modern Muttra.—ED.

was not long in giving birth to Krishna, and the day of his birth was the eighth of the moon of the month *Badra* (September)[1]. Being informed that Kamsa had resolved to kill the child, Devaki managed to escape the vigilance of the guards and had him secretly carried away into the town of Gokulam.

At the same time Yasoda, wife of the shepherd Nanda, had given birth to a daughter. To prevent this cruel design of Kamsa, the two children were interchanged. Yasoda, who had sunk into a deep slumber during the birth of her child, had been unable to ascertain whether she had given birth to a boy or a girl; she did not therefore detect the substitution, and always looked upon Krishna as her own son.

As soon as the tyrant Kamsa had learnt of his sister's safe delivery, he ordered the child to be brought to him that it might be put to death. But the child, an incarnation of the Supreme Being, was already in safety at Gokulam, in the house of the shepherd Nanda. Kamsa wished, but in vain, to vent his rage on the little girl, who was no less than the Supreme Being himself, under the name of Badra-Kali, whose adventures are to be found written in the history of the goddesses.

Little Krishna spent his earlier years in games and amusements suitable to his age. His ordinary pastime was to steal milk and butter, which he divided afterwards with his friends the shepherdesses. His youth was thus spent in the midst of a pastoral life, and he is often represented playing on a flute, the favourite instrument of shepherds.

On reaching manhood he gave himself up entirely to a life of dissipation and most unbridled debauchery. He did not even respect the virtue of his sisters or of his own mother. He carried them all off by force, and treated them as if they had been his legitimate wives.

In the meanwhile he declared war against the tyrant Kamsa, his uncle, routed and slew him, and gave back the crown to Ugrasena.

Having resolved to marry, he carried off the maiden Rukmani and very many other virtuous girls. The number of his wives amounted to sixteen thousand, and they bore him a prodigious number of children.

[1] It was the month of *Sravana* (eighth day after full moon), not the month of *Badra*.—ED.

He waged several wars against Vacharada, against the king Banasura, and even against Siva himself, who had sided with the latter monarch. It was Aniruddha, Krishna's son, who caused the dispute between his father and Banasura, whose daughter Balaramma[1] he (Aniruddha) had attempted to carry off. The ravisher was kept prisoner for a long time, and was only given back to his father after several long and bloody battles. Krishna, after rescuing his son, began to build in the middle of the sea the town called Dwaraka, and took his innumerable family thither.

At length, having seen all his children die before his eyes, he himself paid tribute to nature. The victim of a curse, which a penitent in his wrath had pronounced against him, he fell pierced by a huntsman's arrow.

The following are some of the principal blessings which the world gained from this incarnation of Vishnu in the person of Krishna:—

He put to death Poothana, a woman celebrated for her extraordinary size, strength, and ferocity.

He effaced from the earth a great number of giants.

He uprooted two trees of such tremendous size that they covered one-half of the earth with their shade.

He chastised the serpent Kaliya.

He suspended a mountain in the air to serve as an umbrella for forty thousand shepherds who had been overtaken by a storm[2].

Besides all this, he cut to pieces Kamsa and all his followers.

However, this is enough about the incarnations of Vishnu. Others before me have spoken at great length about him. I will merely repeat that, judging by the outward worship paid to him, this god must be considered as disputing the highest rank with Brahma; and in fact many Hindu pundits look upon Brahma merely as the chief of the inferior gods.

To Vishnu are attributed five weapons called by the common name of *panchayuda*. But the two principal ones are the *sankha*, which he holds in his left hand, and the *chakra*, which he holds in his right.

[1] The daughter's name was Usha.—ED.

[2] The mountain on that account was called 'Govardhanagiri.'—ED.

SIVA.

This god is also called Ishwara, Rudra, Sadasiva, Mahadeva, Parameswara, and a host of other names. He is represented under a horrible form, in allusion no doubt to the power which he possesses of destroying everything. He is made to appear still more frightful by having his body covered with ashes. His long hair is plaited in a strange manner; his eyes of huge size make him appear to be in a constant state of fury. Instead of jewels his ears are adorned with snakes, which are likewise twined round his body. There are some colossal idols representing Siva which are calculated to inspire genuine terror.

The principal attitude of this god, as I have already mentioned more than once, is the power of destruction. Some Hindu authors attribute to him also the power of creation.

His vehicle is a bull, and his principal weapon is the trident or *trisula*.

The history of Siva, like that of the other Hindu deities, is a tissue of the most extravagant fables. It consists of endless wars waged by him against the giants, of his hatred and jealousy towards the other gods, and, above all, of his shameless intrigues.

In one of his wars, wishing by an unexpected attack to accomplish the ruin of all his enemies, the giants, and to take possession of the *tripuram* in which they had entrenched themselves, he split the earth into two equal parts, and took one-half as a weapon. He made Brahma the general of his army; the four Vedas served him for horses. Vishnu was used as an arrow, while Mandra Parvata served as a bow. In place of a bow-string he tied to his bow a monstrous serpent. With this formidable equipment Siva led his army against the enemies of the gods, took from them the three fortresses which they had constructed, and exterminated them all without sparing a single one.

Siva had much trouble in finding a wife; but having done a long and austere penance in the deserts bordering on Mandra Parvata, Parvata was so touched that he finally consented to give him in marriage his daughter Parvati.

THE LINGAM.

The *lingam*, an object of deep veneration throughout India, is the symbol of Siva, and it is under this obscene form that the

god is principally honoured. I have described elsewhere what this infamous figure represents. One finds in several Puranas details of the origin of the superstitious worship of which it is the object. However much these details may vary, as to the main point the story is everywhere the same. Here, in abridged form, is what the *Linga-purana* says:—Brahma, Vishnu, and Vasishta, accompanied by a numerous following of illustrious penitents, went one day to *Kailasa* (the paradise of Siva) to pay a visit to the god, and surprised him in the act of intercourse with his wife. He was not in the least disconcerted by the presence of the illustrious visitors, and so far from showing any shame at being discovered in such a position, continued to indulge in the gratification of his sensual desires.

The fact was that the shameless god was greatly excited by the intoxicating liquors which he had drunk, and with his reason obscured by passion and drunkenness, he was no longer in a state to appreciate the indecency of his conduct.

At sight of him some of the gods, and especially Vishnu, began to laugh; while the rest displayed great indignation and anger, and loaded the shameless Siva with insults and curses.

They said to him, 'Behold, thou art but a devil, thou art worse even than a devil! thou hast the form of one, and dost possess all the wickedness! We came here in a spirit of friendliness to pay thee a visit, and thou dost not blush to make us spectators of thy brutal sensuality! Be accursed! Let no virtuous person from henceforth have any dealings with thee! Let all those who approach thee be regarded as brutes, and be banished from the society of honest folk!'

After pronouncing these curses, the gods and the penitents retired, covered with shame.

When Siva had recovered his senses a little, he asked his guards who it was that had come to visit him. They told him everything that had taken place, and described to him the angry attitude that his illustrious friends had assumed.

The words of the guards fell on Siva and his wife Durga like a clap of thunder, and they both died of grief in the same position in which the gods and the penitents had surprised them. Siva desired that the act which had covered him with shame, and which had been the cause of his death, should be celebrated among mankind.

'My shame,' said he, 'has killed me; but it has also given me new life, and a new shape, which is that of the *lingam!* You, evil spirits, my subjects, regard it as my double self! Yes, the *lingam* is I myself, and I ordain that men shall offer to it henceforth their sacrifices and worship. Those who honour me under the symbol of the *lingam* shall obtain, without fail, the object of all their desires, and a place in *Kailasa*. I am the Supreme Being, and so is my *lingam*. To render to it the honours due to a god is an action of the highest merit. The margosa-tree is, of all trees, the one I love the best. If any one wish to obtain my favours, he must offer me the leaves, the flowers, and the fruit thereof. Hear once more, evil spirits, my subjects. Those who fast on the fourteenth day of the moon of the month *Makha* (February) in honour of my *lingam*, and those who, on the following night, do *puja*, and present to me leaves of the margosa-tree, shall be certain of a place in *Kailasa*[1].

'Hear yet again, evil spirits, my subjects. If you desire to become virtuous, learn what are the benefits to be derived from honour rendered to my *lingam*. Those who make images of it with earth or cow-dung, or do *puja* to it under this form, shall be rewarded; those who make it in stone shall receive seven times more reward, and shall never behold the Prince of Darkness; those who make it in silver shall receive seven times more reward than the last named; and those who make it in gold shall be seven times more meritorious still.

'Let my priests go and teach these truths to men, and compel them to embrace the worship of my *lingam*! The *lingam* is Siva himself; it is white; it has three eyes and five faces; it is arrayed in a tiger's skin. It existed before the world, and it is the origin and the beginning of all beings. It disperses our terrors and our fears, and grants us the object of all our desires.'

It is incredible, it is impossible to believe, that in inventing this vile superstition the religious teachers of India intended that the people should render direct worship to objects the very names of which, among civilized nations, are an insult to decency. Without any doubt the obscene symbol contained an allegorical meaning, and was a type, in the first instance, of the

[1] It is the *bilva* (*Aegle Marmelos*), not the *margosa*, which is sacred to Siva. —ED.

reproductive forces of nature, the generative source of all living beings. For the rest, the *lingam* offers an incontestable analogy to the *priapus* of the Romans and the *phallus* of the Egyptians. The fact is, all the founders of false religions had need to appeal to the baser senses, and to flatter the passions of their proselytes in order to attract them to their foolish doctrines and blind them to their impostures.

What I have just said about the *lingam* applies also to the *namam*[1], another emblematic and not less abominable symbol, which is not unlike the *Baal-peor* or *Belphegor* of the Moabites.

One sees figures of the *lingam*, not only in the temples dedicated to Siva, but also on the high-roads, in public places, and other frequented spots.

VIGNESHWARA.

This divinity bears also the names of Ganesa, Pillayar, Vinayaka, &c. He is venerated by Hindus of all sects, and his cult is universal. One comes across his idol everywhere—in temples, schools, *chuttrams*, public places, forts, on the high-roads, near wells, fountains, tanks; in short, in all frequented places. It is taken into houses, and in all public ceremonies Ganesa is always the first god to be worshipped. He is, as I have said before, and as his name implies, the god of obstacles, and by reason of this a Hindu begins every serious undertaking by seeking to propitiate him.

He is represented under a hideous form, with an elephant's head, an enormous stomach, and disproportioned limbs, and with a rat at his feet. Siva was his father, and Badra-Kali, or Durga his mother. He is said to have given himself up entirely to a life of meditation, and to have never married.

The first time that his mother Badra-Kali saw him, she reduced his head to ashes by the brilliancy of her look. Siva, on learning this misfortune, and being sorely grieved at having a son without a head, considered earnestly how he might provide him with this eminently useful member. With this intent he sent his servants with orders to cut off the head of the first living creature they met sleeping with the face turned towards the north, and to bring it to him. An elephant happened to be the first creature they perceived in this position, and following

[1] Part I, Chapter IX.

Siva's instructions they cut off the animal's head, and hurried back with it to their master. Siva took it and fitted it on his son's neck, and since then Ganesa has preserved the shape under which he is still represented.

The elephant's head, and also the rat, are probably emblems of the prudence, sagacity, and forethought which the Hindus attribute to this divinity.

Indra, or Devendra.

Indra is the king of the gods of the second rank, who live with him in *Swarga*. He is the son of Kasyapa and Aditi. The inferior gods and the virtuous persons who inhabit his happy domains are without number.

To make them happy Indra distributes *amrita* (nectar) to them, and allows them to enjoy all the pleasures of the senses, to which he also gives himself up without restraint; there is no kind of sensual enjoyment that cannot be indulged in, without satiety, in *Swarga*.

Indra's vehicle is an elephant, and his weapon the *vajra*, a kind of sharp knife. Lightning is also his weapon in his wars against the giants.

The Ashta-Dik-Palakas.

Indra occupies the first rank among the eight Dik-Palakas, who preside over and guard the eight principal divisions of the world. The following table will explain all that is interesting about these divinities, who are placed by the Hindus after the gods of the first rank:—

Names.	Position of their kingdoms.	Their chargers.	Their weapons [1].	Colour of their garments.
Indra	East	An elephant	The *vajra*	Red
Agni	South-east	A ram	The *sakti*	Violet
Yama	South	A buffalo	The *danda*	Orange
Neiruta	South-west	A man	The *kunta*	Dark yellow
Varuna	West	A crocodile	The *pasa*	White
Vayu	North-west	An antelope	The *dwaja*	Blue
Kubera	North	A horse	The *khadga*	Pink
Isana	North-east	A bull	The *trisula*	Grey

[1] The names of these weapons cannot be translated into any European language; each one of them has a particular shape, and in no way resembles any of ours.—Dubois.

Those who seek for analogies between the gods of India and those of Greece may remark certain striking similarities. Like the Greek gods, each Hindu god has a particular weapon, and also a particular animal sacred to him.

Abodes of Bliss.

There are four Abodes of Bliss: *Swarga, Kailasa, Vaikuntha,* and *Sattya-loka.* The first is Indra's paradise, the second Siva's, the third Vishnu's, and the fourth Brahma's.

In describing these pleasant retreats, the Hindu books represent Mount Maha-Meru, on the slopes of which they are situated, as being in the form of a cone, convoluted like a snail's shell and divided into stages. On the first, on the north side, is *Swarga,* Indra's paradise; to the left, on the east side and at the next stage, is *Kailasa,* Siva's paradise; at a still higher stage, on the south side, is *Vaikuntha,* Vishnu's paradise; and, finally, on the summit of the mountain is *Sattya-loka,* Brahma's paradise.

Swarga.

Indra's paradise is inhabited by the gods of the second rank, who are all children of Kasyapa, and of his first wife Aditi. The palace of Indra, their eldest son, and king of this realm of delight, is in the centre, sparkling with gold and precious stones. There is also another palace of equal splendour for Sati, his wife, Puloma's daughter. Their son is Jayanta. In this paradise grows the famous *kalpa*-tree, the golden fruit of which has an exquisite flavour; and there also is the cow *Kamadhenu,* which gives delicious milk. This fruit and milk form the nourishment of the gods.

The *kalpa*-tree and *Kamadhenu* the cow are held in high esteem by the Hindus, and are referred to on almost every page of their books. This *tree of life* of the Hindus, and their *Swarga* itself, may well be but a gross imitation of the *arbor vitae* and of the earthly paradise of Genesis. Be this as it may, however, the *kalpa* tree, which grows to the height of ten *yojanas,* has the power of satisfying all the desires of men who put their trust in it. As for *Kamadhenu* the cow, she is not less prodigal of her bounties, and can, among other things, grant milk and butter in abundance to anybody who invokes her with sincere faith

and devotion. Many other trees are to be found in *Swarga*, while the limpid waters of many rivers meander there in all directions, the principal one being the Mandakini. The eyes of the inhabitants of this happy abode are refreshed by the rhythmical and voluptuous movements of throngs of dancing-girls; while the sweet notes of the *vina* and *kanohra*[1], which the Gandharvas, famous musicians, play in accompaniment to their melodious songs, charm the ear without ceasing. Innumerable courtesans, too, are always ready to satisfy the passions which they excite. Bruhaspati performs the office of *guru* to the gods in *Swarga*, and explains the Vedas to them. Finally, strangely enough, two duly appointed physicians are to be found there, Chonata and Kumara[2]. The Ashta-Dik-Palakas, mentioned above, hold the first rank, as is natural, among the inhabitants of this Abode of Bliss. The nine planets also have their abode there, and it is from thence that they shine upon us. The seven famous penitents, or *munis*, and an infinite number of other saints are the habitual guests of Indra.

Entrance to *Swarga* is granted to all virtuous persons, without exception, of whatever rank or caste, provided they have attained on earth the required degree of sanctity.

KAILASA.

Above *Swarga* is a city constructed on a triangular plan. It is called *Kailasa*, and sometimes *Parvata* (mountain). It is a charming place. Siva rules over it, and it is here that he resides with his wife Parvati. They are both depicted as giving themselves up continually to carnal pleasures. Ganesa and Kartika are their sons, both of whom are endowed with extraordinary strength. Ganesa, the elder, devotes himself exclusively to meditation; Kartika cares for nothing but weapons, and thinks of nothing but war.

Siva's courtiers are a band of evil spirits, of whom Nandi is the chief. His lieutenants are Bringi, Bhima, and Kadurgita, all of whom have terrible countenances.

[1] We cannot trace this word. The Abbé probably means the Tamil *Kinnaram*.—ED.

[2] The Abbé has made a mistake here. Apparently he refers to the twins Asvini Kumaras, divine physicians.—ED.

Bhairava, Bhima, and Darshana are charged with the care of the city, which is peopled with various kinds of evil spirits, horrible to behold, which spread terror everywhere. They go about naked, and are continually drinking, quarrelling, and fighting.

Siva, who consumes intoxicating liquors only, is always drunk. He abandons himself to unlimited and shameless excesses of sensuality. He is clothed in a tiger's skin covered with ashes, and his body is entwined with serpents. Seated on his ox, he rides occasionally on the neighbouring mountains with his wife Parvati. The demons who form their escort utter piercing cries, terminating with a shriek like *kil*! *kil*! and it is from this that *Kailasa* takes its name. The paradise of *Kailasa* is reserved for the followers of Siva, the worshippers of the disgusting *lingam*.

VAIKUNTHA.

Vaikuntha is the paradise of Vishnu, reserved for those who are specially devoted to the worship of this god. It is above *Kailasa*, and occupies a most charming site; hence the name *Vaikuntha*, signifying 'Pleasant.' Gold and precious objects of all sorts sparkle on every side. In the midst of this enchanting abode rises a superb palace inhabited by Vishnu and his wife Lakshmi; close to them are Pradyumna, their eldest son, and a host of other children, their grandson Aniruddha, son of Pradyumna, Usha, his wife, and their daughter Bana. In this abode, as in the rest, there are flowers, trees, quadrupeds, birds, and especially peacocks in great numbers.

The river Karona flows below the royal residence [1]. Many penitents live on its banks and there spend happy, peaceful days; their food consists of fruits and vegetables, which grow without cultivation; their leisure is divided between reading the Vedas and meditating.

SATTYA-LOKA.

The name of *Sattya-loka* signifies 'The Place of Truth,' or 'The Abode of Virtue.' *Sattya-loka* is the highest of the Abodes of Bliss. It is the paradise of Brahma, where he lives with his

[1] The name of the river is Viraja and not Karona.—ED.

wife Sarasvati. The Ganges waters this divine retreat, and it is hence that some of its purifying waters have reached the earth. It is reserved for those Brahmins only who, by the practice of virtue on earth, have arrived at the degree of sanctity necessary to gain admittance thereto. Persons of any other caste, however edifying and pure their lives may have been, are irrevocably excluded from it.

CHAPTER VI

The Worship of Animals.—The Worship of Monkeys.—Of Bulls.—Of the *Garuda* Bird.—Of Snakes.—Of Fishes.—The Worship of *Bhootams*, or Evil Spirits.—Human Sacrifices.

Of all the different kinds of idolatry the worship of animals is certainly one of the lowest forms, and the one which most unmistakably reveals the weakness of human nature; for man thus shows himself incapable of recognizing in His works the great Creator of the universe. What a sad spectacle it is when man, created in God's own image, with a countenance so formed that he might always be *looking heavenwards*[1], so forgets his sublime origin as to dare to bow the knee to animals! It is almost incredible that human beings should so debase themselves. But we must not lament over facts without inquiring into their causes. The worship of animals becomes more comprehensible when one considers the foundations on which all idolatrous religions are based; namely, self-interest and fear. In the eyes of a heathen anything that can be useful to him seems worthy of being worshipped; and this feeling is much stronger in regard to anything that can harm him. Thus the Egyptians, though they were so highly cultivated in the arts and sciences, worshipped the bull Apis, the ibis, the crocodile, beetles, snakes, &c., on account either of the good they hoped for or of the harm they feared from them. As for the Hindus, they appear to be firmly convinced that as all living creatures are either useful or hurtful to man, it is better to worship them all, paying them more or less attention in proportion to the advantages they offer or the fear which their qualities inspire.

[1] 'Os homini sublime dedit, caelumque tueri
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.'
Ovid. *Metamorphoses*, i. 85 sq.—Dubois.

First on their list of sacred creatures are the monkey, the bull, the bird called *garuda*, and snakes.

THE MONKEY, OR HANUMAN.

The great reverence in which the monkey is held by Hindu is no doubt due to its likeness to man, both in its outward appearance and in many of its habits. Perhaps also its thievish and destructive propensities may be partly accountable for the consideration which it enjoys. At any rate Hindu books are full of marvellous tales of monkeys. In my remarks in the preceding chapter on Rama I have already described some of the deeds of valour wrought by this hero at the head of his army of monkeys. Indeed, the greater part of the *Ramayana*, the favourite epic of the Hindus, is devoted to the achievements of these valiant monkey soldiers and their illustrious general.

The cult of the monkey Hanuman extends over the whole of India. The followers of Vishnu are specially devoted to this deity, but all are ready to give him a share of their homage. Images of Hanuman are to be seen in most temples and in many public places. They are also to be found in forests and desert spots. Indeed, in those provinces where there are many followers of Vishnu, you can scarcely move a yard without coming across an image of this beloved god. The offerings made to him consist solely of natural products, never of a sacrifice of blood. Wherever monkeys are to be found in a wild state, their devotees daily bring them offerings of boiled rice, fruit, and various other kinds of food to which they are partial. This is considered a most meritorious act.

BASAVA, OR THE BULL.

This is the favourite deity of the Sivaites, or followers of Siva. Many conjectures have been offered as to the origin of bull-worship among so many idolatrous peoples. It seems to me, however, that the reason is simple enough. Was it not most natural that those who worshipped so many different objects should offer homage to animals which were so pre-eminently valuable to them, which were their companions in labour, on which they relied to carry on all their agricultural work, which in primitive times constituted their one source of wealth,

and which even at the present day form the basis of material wealth all over the world? The nations which did not actually worship them as gods were always careful to show the high value they set upon them. For instance, amongst the Romans to kill a bull was accounted a no less crime than to kill a fellow-citizen[1]; and it was a long time before the Athenians could bring themselves to offer up one of these animals in their sacrifices. There is every reason therefore why the Hindus should regard their cattle with extraordinary veneration, for as a matter of fact oxen and cows are so absolutely necessary to them that one may safely say it would be quite impossible for them to exist without their help. For this reason, therefore, these animals are reckoned among the most sacred objects of their religion. Their images are to be found in almost every temple, particularly in those dedicated to Siva, and are to be seen in great numbers in those districts where the sect of the Lingayats predominates. The sacred bull is usually represented as lying down on a pedestal, with three of his legs doubled under him, and the right forefoot extended straight out beyond his head[2].

Live bulls are also regarded as objects of public worship by Hindu devotees. By way of investing them with an appearance of sanctity these sacred beasts are branded on the right hind quarter with a design representing Siva's special weapon. They are allowed perfect liberty, are never tied up in a shed, and may graze wherever they please. They are often to be seen in the streets, where their devotees worship them publicly and at the same time bring them rice and different kinds of grain to eat. They are all under the safeguard of superstition, and though they wander hither and thither night and day, I have never heard of one being stolen. When they die, even the Pariahs dare not eat their flesh, the bodies being buried with much pomp and ceremony.

Priests of Siva sometimes travel from district to district with these sacred bulls, whose horns and bodies are decorated with much taste. Large crowds accompany them, carrying flags of various colours and headed by bands of music. The real object

1 'Bovis tanta fuit apud antiquos veneratio, ut tam capitale esset bovem occidere quam civem.'—Columella, Book VI.

2 There is an enormous specimen in the Tanjore temple.—ED.

of all this display is to collect alms from the faithful, an object which is invariably attained; for multitudes flock to worship the venerated animal, prostrating themselves before it with every absurd demonstration of devotion that superstition can suggest, and one and all never forget to recompense the leader of the procession, who, when he thinks that he has collected sufficient contributions, sets the sacred beast at liberty again.

The Bird Garuda.

The kite *garuda* is held in great honour, especially by the followers of Vishnu. Brahmins, after finishing their morning ablutions, will wait till they have seen one of these birds before returning to their homes. They call this a *lucky meeting*, and go back fully convinced that it will bring them good luck for the rest of the day. It is a common bird enough. Naturalists classify it among the eagles (the Malabar eagle), but it is the smallest of the species. It measures barely a foot from its beak to the tip of its tail, and about two feet and a half across its outspread wings. Its body is covered with glossy feathers of a bright chestnut colour; its head, neck, and breast are whitish; the ends of its wings are a glossy black; its feet are yellow, with black claws. It is a pretty and graceful bird to look at; but its offensive odour renders a near acquaintance unpleasant. It utters a harsh, shrill, quavering cry like *kra! kra!* the last note of which is prolonged into a mournful wail. Though apparently strong and vigorous, it never attacks any bird larger than itself that would be likely to offer resistance. Indeed its timid and cowardly nature makes one doubt whether it really does belong to the same species as the king of the feathered tribe. It wages perpetual war upon lizards, rats, and especially snakes. When it espies one of the last-named, it swoops down upon it, seizes it in its talons, carries it up an enormous height, and then lets it drop. Following swiftly, it picks it up again, killed of course by its fall, and flies off with it to some neighbouring tree where it may be devoured at leisure. Probably out of gratitude for the services rendered by this bird in ridding the country of reptiles, the Hindus have erected shrines in its honour, just as the Egyptians, from a similar motive, placed the ibis amongst their tutelary deities.

The *garuda* also feeds on frogs and any small fish that it can seize in shallow water. Moreover, it does not show much consideration for the poultry-yards of its worshippers, on which it often makes a raid. But its cowardice is such that an angry hen defending her chickens can easily put it to flight, and only the chickens which have imprudently wandered from their mother's side are likely to fall into its clutches. Protected by superstition, the bird has no fear of man; it may often be seen on the roof of a house, or in some frequented place. Sunday is the day specially devoted to *garuda*-worship. I have often seen Vishnavites assembled together on that day for the express purpose of paying it homage. They call the birds around them by throwing pieces of meat into the air, which the birds catch very cleverly with their claws.

To kill one of these birds would be considered as heinous a crime as homicide, especially in the eyes of the followers of Vishnu. If they come across one that has been accidentally killed, they give it a splendid funeral. And they pay the same respect to the dead remains of a monkey or a snake, performing in each case various ridiculous ceremonies, in order to expiate the wickedness of the unknown author of this dreadful crime.

Snakes.

Among the many dangerous animals which infest India snakes are certainly the most to be dreaded. Though tigers are no doubt very formidable enemies, they are not answerable for nearly so many deaths as snakes. During my stay in India hardly a month passed without my hearing that some person had been killed, close to where I happened to be living, by the bite of a poisonous snake. One of the commonest snakes, and at the same time the most venomous, is the cobra, the bite of which causes almost immediate death. It is accordingly held in peculiar veneration.

Snake-worship, which is a common form of idolatry among almost every heathen nation, no doubt owes its origin to men's natural fear of these reptiles. They try to propitiate the poisonous species with offerings and sacrifices, and they treat those which do not possess deadly fangs with the same amount of respect, because in their ignorance they attribute

to a benevolent instinct what is really only due to want of power.

As if the actual presence of these dangerous reptiles were not sufficient to terrify the native mind, Hindu books are filled with stories and fables about them, and pictures or images of them meet you at every turn.

Snake-worshippers search for the holes where they are likely to be found, and which more often than not are in the little mounds raised by the *kariahs*, or white ants. When they have found one, they visit it from time to time, placing before it milk, bananas, and other food which the snake is likely to fancy. If a snake happens to get into a house, far from turning out the inconvenient guest and killing it on the spot, they feed it plentifully and offer sacrifices to it daily. Hindus have been known to keep deadly snakes for years in their houses, feeding and petting them. Even if a whole family were in danger of losing their lives, no one member of it would be bold enough to lay sacrilegious hands on such an honoured inmate.

Temples have also been erected in their special honour. There is a particularly famous one in Eastern Mysore, at a place called Subramaniah, which is also the name of the great snake so often mentioned in Hindu fables[1]. Every year in the month of December a solemn feast is held in this temple. Innumerable devotees flock to the sacred spot from all parts, to worship and offer sacrifices to the snakes. An enormous number of the reptiles have taken up their abode inside the building, where they are fed and looked after by the officiating Brahmins. The special protection thus afforded has allowed them to increase to such an extent that they may be met with at every turn all over the neighbourhood. Many of their worshippers take the trouble to bring them food. And woe to him who should have the audacity to kill one of these gruesome deities. He would get himself into terrible trouble[2].

The denizens of water also come in for their share of Hindu worship. It is quite a common thing to see Brahmins throwing

[1] It is also called *Ananta* and *Mahaśesha*. It is on this snake that Vishnu reclines while sleeping on the sea.—DUBOIS.

[2] There are many temples of this description still existing, to which pilgrimages are made.—ED.

rice or other food to the fishes in rivers and tanks. Where the Brahmins exercise undisputed authority, fishing is strictly prohibited, as, for instance, near the large *agraharas*, or Brahmin villages; and in those parts of the rivers where they are in the habit of bathing I have often seen huge shoals of large fish swimming about near the surface, waiting for their food. At the slightest sound they will rush in hundreds towards the bank, and they are so tame that they will actually feed out of a man's hand[1].

What I have said so far gives but a feeble notion of the superstitious feelings with which Hindus regard animals. Ought these feelings, as some writers think, to be attributed to their extreme tender-heartedness, to their gentle and compassionate natures? I should say decidedly not. Such childish, yet shameful, forgetfulness of the superiority of man over all other created beings cannot surely arise from any noble sentiments. I only see in it the foolish errors of a cowardly and weak-minded people, who are slaves to the idle fancies of their own imaginations, and whose reason has become so obscured that they are incapable of recognizing the just and natural laws governing the safety of mankind[2]. The most irreconcilable superstitions[3] and the most ill-conceived considerations of self-interest are the only motives which actuate Hindus in this absurd idolatry of birds and beasts. Any one who has made a careful study of the character of Brahmins, who display so much care and tenderness for monkeys, snakes, and birds of prey, will soon perceive that these same men show the most utter callousness and indifference for the misfortunes and wants of their fellow-men. Food that they bestow so lavishly on all sorts of animals would be pitilessly withheld from an unfortunate

[1] Fish-worship is connected with the fish *Avatar* or *Matsya-avatar* of Vishnu.—ED.

[2] In India we see the grossest forms of superstition side by side with the most wonderfully refined systems of philosophy. The philosophic Brahmin contends that it is ridiculous to try to inculcate into the common and uneducated herd the subtler forms of doctrine. Hence the various forms of idolatrous worship.—ED.

[3] People have been surprised that the crocodile was worshipped in one part of Egypt, while the ichneumon, the mortal enemy of its young, was worshipped in another. What would they say to the Hindus who might be found worshipping the deity *garuda* at the very moment that the latter was in the act of tearing to pieces and devouring their other deity, the snake?—DUBOIS.

man who was not of their own caste, though he were dying of hunger at their very doors. Instead of the kindly precept of Christian charity, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' a precept which should draw together the whole human race in the bonds of brotherhood, the Brahmins have substituted, 'Thou shalt love all animals as thyself.' I will not go so far as to say that Hindus are unacquainted with those moral precepts which are more or less common to all civilized nations; but prejudice and superstition have so perverted their judgement that they are incapable of regulating their conduct with due regard to what is right and proper from a human point of view. More than this: in cases where these precepts are practised with a praiseworthy object, all the merit is spoilt by the evidently self-interested motives which influence them. To perform a virtuous action simply for the sake of enjoying the feeling of having done right, is a sentiment entirely beyond their comprehension. If you were to ask a rich Hindu why he spent part of his fortune in erecting buildings consecrated to religious worship, in establishing rest-houses for the accommodation of travellers, or in planting trees along the high-road to shelter wayfarers from the burning sun, he would frankly tell you that such munificence was calculated to raise him in public esteem during his lifetime, and to transmit his name to posterity after his death.

Bhootams, or Evil Spirits.

Almost all ancient philosophers, among them Pythagoras and the followers of Plato, have agreed in saying that each human being is under the influence of a good spirit or an evil spirit; some even go so far as to allow him both a good and a bad spirit. Our own revealed religion can suggest more reasonable ideas on this subject; but superstition, the creature of ignorance and fear, was obliged to fall back on the imagination to find plausible reasons for the alternations of good and evil to which mankind is subject. Incapable of a just appreciation of the workings of Providence, and unable to fathom that which is inscrutable, these heathen people imagine that the sorrows and troubles which befall them are all the work of invisible and malicious spirits, to whom they must offer prayers and sacrifices by way of propitiation. Hindus carry their credulity on this

point to a ridiculous excess. The worship of evil spirits is in fact firmly established and very generally practised among them[1]. These spirits are called by the generic name of *bhootams*, which also means elements, as if the elements were nothing else but evil spirits materialized and were the primary cause of all natural disturbances and troubles. Such demons are also called *pisachas*, *dehias*, &c.

There are temples specially dedicated to the worship of evil spirits; and there are some districts where this particular form of idolatry holds almost exclusive sway. Most of the inhabitants of the long range of hills which bounds Mysore on the west acknowledge no other deity than the devil. Each family has its own *bhootam*, to which it offers daily prayers and sacrifices in order that he may preserve its members from the ills which the *bhootams* of their enemies might bring upon them. *Bhootam* images are to be found all over these hills. Sometimes they are idols with hideous faces, but more often they are merely shapeless blackened stones. Every *bhootam* has his own particular name. Some are thought to be more powerful and more spiteful than others, and these are naturally most widely worshipped.

All these evil spirits delight in sacrifices of blood. Buffaloes, pigs, goats, cocks, and other living animals are frequently slain in their honour; and when rice is offered to them it must be dyed with blood. They do not disdain to accept offerings of intoxicating liquors and drugs, or even flowers, provided they are red.

I have noticed that the worship of evil spirits is most prevalent in mountainous regions and in sparsely populated rural tracts. The inhabitants of these out-of-the-way districts have little communication with more civilized parts, and are more ignorant, more cowardly, and consequently more superstitious even than their more civilized fellow-countrymen. All the troubles and misfortunes that happen to them are put down to their *bhootams*,

1 The system of demon-worship seems to have been that of the tribes whom the Hindus supplanted and drove into the mountains or into the extreme south. The Brahmins have given a place to those demons in their system, and represent them as attendants of Siva (*Bhutesa* = lord of demons). The method of worship, the ceremonies and observances of this ancient system, are foreign to the genius of Hinduism.—POPE.

whose anger they think they have somehow incurred; and it is for the purpose of disarming this malevolence that they are so prodigal in their worship of them.

The wild tribes scattered through the forests of Malabar, on the Carnatic Hills, and elsewhere, where they are known as *Kadu-Kurumbars, Sholigars, Irulers,* &c., worship no other gods but these *bhootams.*

Human Sacrifices.

In vain has the attempt been made, for the credit of humanity, to throw doubt upon the many evidences of human sacrifices; but unfortunately the proofs are too strong: they are written in blood in the history of many nations, and can be only too clearly proved. Man, overwhelmed with infirmities and misfortunes, and fully convinced that they were the punishment of his sins, imagined that he would appease and propitiate the gods by offering them the noblest and most perfect sacrifice that he could find. Firmly imbued with this horrible idea, he considered himself justified in shedding the blood of human victims as well as that of animals. If such an atrocious custom needed confirmation, recent instances of it could be quoted among the Hindus, who, in common with other heathen nations, have not scrupled to drench the altars of their gods with the blood of their fellow-men.

I will say nothing of the abominable teachings of their magicians in this respect. Criminal abuses committed by a few are no proof of the absence of religion and morality in a nation as a whole. If an infamous charlatan ventures to assure powerful patrons who are so weak as to have recourse to his arts, that it is necessary to shed human blood in order to ensure success in his mysterious operations, and if it is only too certain that unfortunate virgins have been sacrificed at the *satkis* of these magicians, the disgrace of it all must rest on the heads of those who are responsible for the maintenance of social order.

A similar sacrifice, however, is recommended when the grand *yagnam* is performed; and though a horse is most often offered, still the *nara-medha*, or sacrifice of a human victim, is held to be infinitely more pleasing to the deity who is the object of the ceremony, and is consequently to be preferred. There is, furthermore, not a single province in India where the inhabitants do not still point out to the traveller places where their Rajahs

used to offer up to their idols unfortunate prisoners captured in war. These horrible sacrifices were performed with a view to securing success to their campaigns through the intervention of the gods. I have visited several places where these scenes of carnage used to be enacted. They are generally situated on the top of a mountain or in some isolated spot; and there you find a mean-looking temple, or sometimes only a little shrine containing the idol in whose honour all this human blood was spilt. The victims were beheaded, and their heads were then hung up as trophies before the bloodthirsty deity. Sometimes the sacrificers contented themselves with cutting off the nose and ears of a prisoner, a very common form of punishment in India, and then sent him away thus mutilated. A little pagoda still exists, perched on the mountain at the foot of which lies the town of Mysore, not far from Seringapatam, which enjoyed a wide notoriety owing to the number of executions which took place there when heathen princes still ruled the country.

Old men have told me that this horrible custom was still practised when they were young. There was nothing in it, according to their views, contrary to law or to the rights of the people as understood by the then reigning princes. It was based on the principle that reprisals were fair and legitimate in war; and it was accepted by the people without any feelings of horror. In fact, the old men spoke of it with the utmost indifference, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. However, the advent of Mahomedans and Europeans, and the just indignation manifested by both at these abominable sacrifices, at last resulted in their abolition. But if the general opinion is to be believed, there are still several small independent princes who, if they had their own way, would still sanction these horrible massacres.

It is, I fear, indisputable that human sacrifices have been offered, both in ancient and modern times, on the altars of Hindu divinities. If any additional proof be needed it may be found in the *Kali-purana*. Abominable rites of this kind are there expressly enjoined. The ceremonies which should accompany them are described in the minutest detail, as also the results which will ensue. The same book contains rules of procedure in sacrificing animals, and mentions the kinds and qualities of those which are suitable as victims. Lastly, it specifies those

deities to whom these bloody offerings are acceptable. Among them are Bahirava, Yama, Nandi, and, above all, the bloodthirsty goddess Kali.

To offer human sacrifices is regarded as the exclusive right of princes, and they are even enjoined to offer them. Neither a Brahmin nor a Kshatriya may ever be sacrificed. Every human victim must be free from all bodily blemish, and must not have been guilty of any serious crime. All animals that are offered as sacrifices must be at least three years old, and must be healthy and free from all defects. Under no circumstances can Brahmins preside or assist in any way at a sacrifice of blood.

CHAPTER VII

Inanimate Objects of Worship.—The *Salagrama* Stone.—The *Tulasi*.—*Darbha* Grass.—The Sacred Fig-Tree.

VOLTAIRE thought it incredible that the Egyptians could ever have worshipped onions and other products of their gardens. He always jeered at this tradition, and looked upon it as a mere fable. But the fact is, in matters of superstition truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. What I have already said and what I am now about to say respecting the Hindus will show incontestably that there are absolutely no limits to the follies of idolatry. The Brahmins, indeed, must needs borrow objects from all three kingdoms of nature in order to arrive at the magnificent total of three hundred and thirty millions of deities which they recognize[1]. Amongst the inanimate substances which they worship, there are four which they consider especially sacred, namely, the *salagrama* stone, *darbha* grass, the plant *tulasi*, and the *aswatta* or sacred fig-tree.

THE SALAGRAMA[2].

This little stone is held in great honour throughout India. Brahmins consider it to be a metamorphosis of Vishnu, and for this reason they offer daily sacrifices to it. It is a sort of fossilized shell, ammonite or nautilus, oval, striated, umbilicated, and ornamented with 'arborizations' or tree-like markings on the outside. The more there are of these tree-like markings, the more highly they are revered.

[1] These are properly speaking *devas* or divine beings, not deities in the strict sense of the term.—ED.

[2] The *salagram* or ammonite found in the Gundick and other rivers flowing through Nepal is said to be a form of Vishnu. The account of its origin given in the *Skanda-purana* is most monstrously and incredibly abominable.—POPE.

It is obligatory for every Brahmin to have one of these stones in his possession. They are handed down from father to son, and are regarded as precious heirlooms which must never pass out of the family. It is written in the *Atharva-Veda* that any Brahmin's house in which there is no *salagrama* is to be considered as impure as a cemetery, and the food which is prepared in it as unclean as a dog's vomit.

Though the *salagrama* is looked upon as one of the metamorphoses of Vishnu, it partakes at the same time of the essence of all the other deities, and through it *puja* can be offered to all of them. There is nothing more efficacious for the remission of sins, no matter how grievous they may be, than to possess some water in which the *salagrama* has been washed. Forgiveness of sins may even be obtained by simply touching the water which has been thus sanctified. He who always keeps such water in his house ensures thereby perpetual wealth; and if he goes further and drinks it, he will not only obtain forgiveness of his sins, but he will also secure his happiness in this world, will always do what is right, and after death will at once enjoy the delights of *Swarga*. But before drinking this marvellous water he must not forget to address the following prayer to Vishnu:—'Narayana, you are the ruler of the world; it is your pleasure to confer blessings on all created beings. I drink this water in which your sacred feet have been washed; I drink it that I may be cleansed from my sins; vouchsafe to pardon me, who am the greatest of sinners.'

The Tulasi.

The *tulasi* (*Ocymum sanctum*) plant is to be found everywhere in sandy and uncultivated places. It is a species resembling the basil that grows in Europe. Brahmins consider it to be the wife of Vishnu, and revere it accordingly. 'Nothing on earth can equal the virtues of the *tulasi*,' say they: *Tulasi-tulana-nasty, ataëva tulasi*. *Puja* must be offered daily to it. When a Brahmin is dying one of these plants is fetched and placed on a pedestal. After *puja* has there been offered to it, a bit of its root is placed in the mouth of the dying man, and the leaves are placed on his face, eyes, ears, and chest; he is then sprinkled from head to foot with a *tulasi* twig which has been dipped in water. While this ceremony is being performed

his friends cry several times aloud, *Tulasi*! *Tulasi*! *Tulasi*! The man can then die in the happy certainty that he will go straight to *Swarga*[1].

To obtain pardon of all one's sins it is sufficient to look at this sacred plant. By touching it a man is purified from all defilement, and if he perform the *namaskara* to it, any illness from which he may be suffering will be cured.

Salvation is assured to any one who waters and attends to it every day. If a branch of it is offered to Vishnu in the month of *Kartika* (November), it will be more pleasing to the god than a thousand cows. Whoever offers to Vishnu, at any time whatsoever, a spray of *tulasi* that has been dipped in saffron, is assured of becoming like Vishnu himself, and of enjoying a share in Vishnu's happiness. To give a twig of *tulasi* to any one who is in any danger, or who is suffering from anxieties and cares, is a certain means of securing for him a satisfactory ending to his difficulties.

These are only a few of the many virtues possessed by the *tulasi*.

Most Brahmins cultivate the plant in their houses, and offer it daily prayers and sacrifices. They also take care that it shall grow near the places where they perform their ablutions, and in their meeting-places, such as the *chuttrams*. The *tulasi* is usually planted on a little mound of sand, which they call *brinda-vanam*[2], or on a square pillar, three or four feet in height, hollow at the top, with its four sides facing the four points of the compass. Brahmins consider it a peculiarly meritorious act to carefully water and cultivate the plant[3].

Its leaves have a sweet aromatic scent and act as a cough elixir and cordial; indeed Hindus think that they possess many medicinal properties. Brahmins always swallow one or two after their meals, as an aid to digestion. They also eat some both before and after performing their ablutions in cold water, in order to keep up the proper temperature in the stomach and to prevent colds and chills and other maladies which might attack them without this preventative. It was

[1] This formality is observed only by the Vishnavites.—ED.

[2] This name is also given to the place inhabited by Krishna.—DUBOIS.

[3] The plant is grown in the court-yard of almost every Brahmin house, and the women offer worship to it daily.—ED.

probably in consequence of its medicinal properties that the Hindus deified the plant in the first instance.

DARBHA GRASS[1].

This plant belongs to the genus borage. It is found everywhere, especially in damp marshy ground. Brahmins always keep some in their houses, and it is used in all their ceremonies. It grows to the height of about two feet and is finely pointed at the top. It is extremely rough to the touch, and if rubbed the wrong way it cuts through the skin and draws blood.

Hindu legends differ as to the origin of this sacred grass. Some say that it was produced at the time when the gods and the giants were all busy churning, with the mountain Mandara, the sea of milk in order to extract from it *amrita* or nectar, which would render them all immortal. The story is that the mountain, while rolling about on Vishnu's back (who, under the form of a turtle, was supporting it), rubbed off a great many of the god's hairs, and that these hairs, cast ashore by the waves, took root there and became *darbha* grass. Others say that the gods, while greedily drinking the *amrita* which they had with infinite pains extracted from the sea of milk, let fall a few drops of the nectar on this grass, which thus became sacred. Then, again, others assert that it was produced at the time when Mohini—that is to say, Vishnu metamorphosed into a courtesan of that name—was distributing *amrita* to the gods. The vessel containing the nectar was supported on Mohini's hip, from which some fleshy filaments fell, and taking root in the ground, developed under the form of *darbha* grass. Be this as it may, *darbha* grass is looked upon as part of Vishnu himself. On the strength of this the Brahmins worship it and offer sacrifices to it, and, as may be remembered, make use of it in all their ceremonies, in the belief that it possesses the virtue of purifying everything. An annual feast instituted in honour of the sacred *darbha* grass is celebrated on the eighth day of the moon in the month of *Badra* (September), and is called the *Darbha-ashtami*. By offering the grass as a sacrifice on that day immortality and blessedness for ten ancestors may be secured;

[1] This sacred grass (*Poa cynosuroides*) is essential in all sacrifices.—ED.

and another result is that one's posterity increases and multiplies like the *darbha* grass itself, which is one of the most prolific members of the vegetable kingdom. I have no idea why this plant should have been selected as worthy of special honour. I have never heard of its being endowed with any peculiar properties, either medicinal, culinary, or other, which would account for its high position.

THE SACRED FIG-TREE.

There are seven different species of trees which the Brahmins consider sacred and accordingly worship; but, strange to say, they are not those which produce the best fruits. It is true, however, that their thick foliage makes a splendid shade—a priceless boon in the hot climate of India. The *aswatta*[1] comes first on the list. It is one of the most beautiful trees in the country, and grows to a huge size. It is to be found everywhere, but especially where the Brahmins perform their ablutions. Its large leaves, very soft to the touch, in colour bright green, are so light and thin that the slightest breeze sets them in motion; and as they produce an impression of most refreshing coolness, the tree is considered to possess health-giving properties. When stirred by a breeze the leaves make a pleasant rustle, which Hindu authors have sometimes likened to the melodious sounds of the *vina*. When to all these attractive natural characteristics is added the tradition that under this tree Vishnu was born, it is no wonder that the *aswatta* is regarded with great respect and veneration. No one is allowed to cut it down, lop off its branches, or even pull off its leaves unless they are to be used for acts of worship. To fell one of these trees would be an awful sacrilege, and quite unpardonable. It is consecrated to Vishnu, or rather it is Vishnu himself under the form of a tree[2]. Sometimes a solemn inaugural ceremony is

[1] It is called *arasa-maram* in Tamil; *ravi-manu* in Telugu; *arali-mara* in Canarese. It is the pagoda fig-tree (*Ficus religiosa*), the tree of God.—DUBOIS.

[2] The *aswatta* or *pipal*, having roots hanging from above and branches bent downwards, is allegorical. Each tree springing from an unperceived root is emblematical of the body, which really springs from and is one with the Godhead. In the *Bhagavat-gita* it is said to typify the universe. It is said to be the male of the *vata* or banian (*Ficus indica*).—ED.

gone through, called *Aswatta pratishta*, or the consecration of the *aswatta* tree. This ceremony, which is an elaborate and costly one, possesses the virtue of transforming the tree into a divinity by inducting Vishnu into it. The Brahmins assert that untold blessings will be showered upon any one who is willing to bear the expense.

I have already described, in the chapters on the *Sandhya* and on Marriage, the manner in which this tree is worshipped, and the honours that are paid to it. Sometimes it is invested, like a Brahmin, with the triple cord, the very same ceremonies being performed. And sometimes it is solemnly married. Generally a *vepu* or margosa tree[1] is selected for its spouse, and occasionally a plantain or banana tree. Almost the same formalities are observed for this curious marriage as in the case of a marriage between Brahmins. Here and there, on the high-roads and elsewhere, the *aswatta* and *vepu* trees may be seen planted side by side on little mounds. This union is not an accidental one, but the result of an actual marriage ceremony. Not thirty yards from the modest hut where I wrote these pages were two of these trees, under whose shade I have often reclined. Their trunks were so closely entwined that they had become incorporated one with another. The inhabitants of the village could remember to have seen them planted together some fifty years before, and said that they had been present at the wedding festivities, which lasted several days, and were celebrated at the expense of a wealthy person of the neighbourhood at a cost of more than 1,500 rupees.

Such, then, are the kind of good works which Hindus perform in order to obtain the pardon of their sins in this world and to ensure their happiness in the next; and such is the state of degradation to which the Brahmins, so haughty, presumptuous, and infatuated with their own ideas and opinions, have reduced a nation which is really worthy of better things[2].

[1] This is another sacred tree, which is dedicated to Siva, the *Melia Azadirachta*.—DUBOIS.

[2] See Racine's *La Religion*, cap. v.—DUBOIS.

CHAPTER VIII

The Administration of Civil and Criminal Justice.—Customs connected with Usury.—Various Kinds of Punishment.—Trial by Ordeal.—The Prevalence of Perjury.—Remarks on the European Courts of Justice.

Governed from time immemorial by despotic princes, who recognized no law but their own free will and pleasure, India has been accustomed to a form of judicial administration peculiar to herself. There has been no legal code, neither has there been any record of legal usage. There are, it is true, a few works containing general legal principles, and a few wise legal maxims which have helped to guide the judges in their decisions; yet nowhere have there been properly organized courts of justice. Ordinary cases have generally been settled, without any right of appeal, by the collectors of public revenue, assisted by assessors selected from the principal inhabitants and by the military officer commanding the district.

The Hindus have neither barristers nor solicitors; neither are they compelled to submit to those long proceedings and interminable delays, the cost of which often equals the value of the matter under dispute. When it is a question of dividing property or of other business of any importance, it is generally submitted to the arbitration of relatives or of the headmen of the caste; and if the nature of the suit or the high rank of the litigants render it advisable, all the principal inhabitants of the district assemble to decide the point at issue [1].

When a case is brought before the revenue officer of the district and his assessors, no difficulty is experienced in getting them to settle the dispute if they think that they are likely to

[1] Since the Abbé's day English courts of justice have been established all over the country, and there are hosts of English barristers and attorneys and Native *vakils* practising in these courts. In the villages, however, arbitration is still resorted to in petty cases.—Ed.

make any money out of it. Otherwise they will easily invent some pretext for putting off the matter till some future time when they may have more leisure to attend to it. In any important case they try their best to bring the parties to an amicable understanding; and if that is impossible, they leave the decision to a *panchayat*, or 'tribunal of five arbitrators,' which may be composed of a larger, but never of a smaller, number than five. If caste customs are the subject of dispute, the settlement devolves upon the heads of the castes.

The procedure generally followed is that dictated by common sense, by ordinary intelligence, and by such principles of equity as one always expects to find established, in theory at any rate, in all civilized countries. Besides, almost every member of a caste is well acquainted with its different customs, which are handed down by tradition from father to son, and thus are never lost. In short, the form of judicial procedure in India is less complicated than that of Europe, and would leave little to be desired if the scales of Themis were not much more easily put off their balance there than in other countries. Impartiality and disinterestedness are virtues with which Hindu judges have but a very slight acquaintance[1]. Too weak to be able to resist the bribes that are offered them, to be independent of the prejudices and predilections of their own circle, or to be above all considerations of personal interest, their judgements are rarely conspicuous for unswerving uprightness and integrity. Almost invariably it is the richer suitor who gains the day; and even the most guilty generally find some means of blunting the sword of justice.

If the parties to a suit have an equally good case or an equally bad one, the party which makes the most noise and is loudest in its abuse of its adversary usually gains the day, for eloquence at the Indian Bar consists in shouting with all the strength of one's lungs, and in pouring such a flood of invective on one's adversary that he has not an answer left.

There are two or three Hindu works which contain rules and directions concerning the administration of justice, both civil and criminal. The best known is the *Dharma-Sastras*, which contains, amongst other things, a treatise on Hindu polytheism. There are also the *Niti-Sastras*, and the *Manu-Sastras*, which

[1] Circumstances have now altered for the better in this respect.—ED.

have been partly translated into English[1]. Many legal precepts and decisions, which would be most useful helps to a judge, might be gathered from these works; but, as usual, they are immersed in a farrago of nonsense, religious and otherwise. For instance, one may find there numbers of decisions in hypothetical cases that are either perfectly ridiculous or morally impossible, and also numbers of idiotic theses propounded *ex cathedra*. Furthermore, whatever valuable information may be found here and there in these books is quite beyond the comprehension of the majority of Hindus, who do not in the least understand the learned terms in which they abound.

The Hindus, it may be remarked, recognize no prescriptive rights. A person in actual possession of any property, who happens to have no legal and authentic document stating that it belongs to him, is liable to be proceeded against judicially and evicted by the representatives of a *soi-disant* legitimate proprietor, even though the actual possessor could prove that he and his ancestors had enjoyed the property without question and in good faith for a century or more. The same principle holds in the case of debts. It is not at all an uncommon thing for creditors to sue the great-grandson of the original debtor for a debt contracted more than a hundred years before, and to force him to pay it even though he himself might be totally unaware of its existence.

Usury is a recognized institution everywhere; and there is no limit to the rate of interest. In the parts of the country where I lived the lowest rate was twelve per cent., and that they call the *dharma-vaddi* or fair interest, a rate that would not shock the most sensitive conscience[2].

Indeed to lend money at that interest is considered a meritorious action. Eighteen to twenty-five per cent. is the usual rate, and money-lenders have been known to exact the extortionate rate of fifty and even a hundred per cent. Happily the cupidity of these money-lenders often ends in their over-

[1] These and other Hindu classics have now been published in English form in *The Sacred Books of the East* series.—ED.

[2] There has been no improvement in this direction since the days of the Abbé, and various proposals have been made to legislate in the matter. —ED.

reaching themselves, for only people who are ruined and absolutely penniless will consent to pay such interest, and consequently the greedy creditor runs the risk of losing both interest and capital. Borrowers of this class do not, as a rule, offer any security which the creditor can pounce upon in case of default of payment. A Hindu's whole property generally consists of a few head of cattle; but such property is inviolable. If a creditor tried to seize a debtor's cattle, the magistrates would interfere to prevent it; not altogether in the interests of the agriculturist, but because by thus taking away the means of cultivating his fields, the creditors would, at the same time, prevent his being able to pay the taxes which belong to the State. Even the hut which the Hindu inhabits does not belong to him, but is the property of the State. When he leaves his village to settle elsewhere, he has no right to dispose of his hovel. It remains unoccupied either until some other inhabitant comes, and with the consent of the headmen of the village takes possession of it, or until it falls to pieces.

Thus it may readily be understood that usurious money-lending does not always tend to enrich the usurer. It very often happens that borrower and lender are both completely ruined together.

Nevertheless, the lenders need never relinquish all hope. The legal system of bankruptcy, which the dishonest man will so gladly avail himself of, and by which he can grow rich at the expense of his creditors, is unknown in India. If a debtor dies insolvent, his descendants to the sixth generation continue to be responsible for his debts [1].

Criminal jurisprudence in India varies greatly. In some castes, for instance, the woman who commits adultery renders herself liable to capital punishment, but neither her parents nor the headmen of her caste have to carry out or assist at her execution. Her husband alone has the right to put her to death. These severe measures, however, have never been put in practice except in countries governed by Native princes. The Mahomedans always opposed them wherever their rule extended. They thought it would be less cruel and more advantageous to the State to inflict very heavy fines for offences of this nature. Thus, a woman or girl not a prostitute by profession, who is

[1] The law on this subject is now in conformity with the English laws.—ED.

proved to have committed adultery, particularly if she afterwards became pregnant and thereby convicted herself, would be sentenced to a very heavy fine, quite beyond her power to pay; and her seducer would also be fined to the same amount. If the guilty pair were unable to find the money, the fine would fall on their nearest relatives, who would be obliged to pay it for them. The same form of punishment was meted out in any cases of a glaring nature where caste customs had been broken. These fines were collected by the revenue officer of the district in which the offences had been committed. It was further the custom for the offenders to give a feast to the headmen of their caste after their fines had been paid, in consideration of which their fault was considered to be wiped out.

There used to be, and still are in some districts, contractors who farmed the revenue derivable from such fines. These men agree to pay a fixed sum to the public treasury, and in exchange they are allowed to keep all the fines they collect for minor offences against caste customs, or other peccadilloes. One can well imagine that all their energies are directed to preventing any persons from going unpunished.

As to more serious crimes, such as theft, homicide, &c., either the ruling prince, his minister, or the governor of a province usually passed sentence on them. The governors, however, had not the right to condemn a man to capital punishment without the ruler's sanction. Thieves, as a rule, got off by giving up what they had stolen, and a good deal more besides, if they had it. The unfortunate man whose goods were stolen only received a very small portion of what he had lost, by far the larger portion remaining in the hands of the judge who had kindly consented to look into the matter. Highway robbery was punished by mutilation—the right hand, nose, and ears of the robber being cut off.

Murder itself was rarely punished by death. If the person accused was rich and knew what to give to the governor who tried the case, means could always be found to divert well-merited punishment from the culprit. If the offender was a poor man, they took away the little that he possessed and banished him and his family from the province.

Thus the most abominable outrages on society were encouraged or only lightly punished in India, whilst imaginary

crimes invariably entailed punishment on any who might be accused of them. A poor Pariah was put to death in Tanjore for having hurled a stone at and killed a bull dedicated to Siva, which was devastating all the rice-fields in the neighbourhood. I knew another man of the same caste whose hand was cut off for having killed, also with a stone, a calf which was trespassing on his field. He too would have certainly lost his life had he not been able to prove that the offence was unintentional, and had not several persons of note interceded in his behalf[1].

A person condemned to capital punishment is either shot, hanged, or beheaded. There are many forms of punishment and torture prevalent in India. For instance, the offender may be banished from the country, severely flogged, or rolled naked on burning hot stones; or he may be condemned to carry a heavy weight on his head or shoulders until he faints from exhaustion; or he may be tied to a stake and exposed to the burning rays of the sun with bare head and naked body; or his hands and feet may be put into fetters tightened till they almost dislocate the joints; needles may be inserted under his nails; the pungent and acrid juice of the pepper-plant may be injected into his eyes and nostrils; or large bodkins may be plunged into the most sensitive and fleshy parts of his body, and on their withdrawal the parts be rubbed with salt and vinegar or burning acids. These are only a few of the horrors invented as punishments by the Hindus. It is not on murderers, thieves, and offenders of that class that these terrible punishments fall. They are much more likely to be inflicted on Government officials guilty of malpractices or malversation of public moneys, or on anybody who is known to be well off, but who declines to allow himself to be fleeced.

In those provinces which are still under Native government, and especially in those where the rulers are Mahomedans, no man's fortune is safe, however honestly it may have been acquired. Government agents, aided by a highly organized system of espionage, contrive to obtain most accurate information respecting the amount of every person's fortune; and whenever an unhappy individual is ascertained to have saved

[1] The Indian Penal Code effectually provides against such sentences nowadays.—ED.

enough to attract the prince's cupidity, he is denounced, arrested, and imprisoned. If these high-handed proceedings are not sufficient to induce him to transfer the contents of his strong box into the prince's treasury, harsher measures, such as torture, are resorted to.

Mahomedans treat even the Brahmins in their service with the same severity. But, it must be admitted, the latter only experience the kind of treatment that they have so often inflicted on their fellows. No one can be harder, more cruel, or more pitiless towards the poor agriculturists than a Brahmin invested with authority, when he sees a chance of wringing money from them. Nevertheless there are many Hindus, and Brahmins particularly, who endure with unshaken firmness and courage the most horrible tortures inflicted on them, even when their lives are in danger, rather than give up their treasures. I have known Brahmins who have been thus persecuted for year after year and without success. They may be seen with their bodies so covered with bruises and wounds, that they appear to be but one large festering sore, a prey to all kinds of vermin; and in this sad plight all relief is denied them, even to the extent of refusing dressing for their wounds.

If the poor prisoner survives these cruel tortures, his tormentors, astonished at his fortitude, will set him at liberty, ashamed at last of their unsuccessful efforts at coercion. This faculty of bearing the most excruciating pain with calm endurance is very common among the Hindus. There are some, however, who are not thus gifted by nature, and who, after resisting as long as possible, at length submit and come to terms with their oppressors. These weaker members receive a present, perhaps, of a new turban or a piece of new cloth. Their persecutors express much regret at having been obliged to resort to such harsh measures, remarking at the same time that their victims might have spared themselves much pain and torment by acceding to their requests in the first instance. The victims are then restored to their former honours and employments. Filled with the desire to recoup themselves for their losses, they seize every opportunity for extortion, until they become rich once more and are forced to disgorge their plunder. But whatever crimes they may commit or whatever tortures they may endure, no disgrace is attached to

either. The penalty of death itself leaves no stain on the memory of the man who has undergone this supreme punishment; and, as a natural consequence, no sort of disgrace is reflected on the family of the victim. A Brahmin would be degraded and banished from his caste for having eaten food which had been prepared, or drunk water that had been drawn, by a person of lower caste; but were he convicted of stealing, of uttering vile calumnies, of attempting to take another man's life, or of betraying his prince or country, none of these offences would prevent his appearing without fear or shame in public, or would hinder his being well received everywhere.

In civil as well as in criminal cases, when the evidence does not completely establish a fact, the Hindus often have recourse to ordeals to decide the point at issue. There are four ordeals generally recognized among Hindus, namely, by the scales, by fire, by water, and by poison[1].

It is not the magistrates only who order these trials by ordeal. Any one has the right to insist on such a trial. Thus, if a theft has been committed, the head of a household compels each member to undergo an ordeal. In the same way, the head of a village may force it upon all the inhabitants on whom criminal suspicion may rest; and a jealous husband may order the same in the case of his wife whose fidelity he doubts. These ordeals sometimes produce such an effect on the real culprits that they are convinced that discovery is inevitable, and think it more prudent to confess their guilt at once than to aggravate the matter by keeping silence. On the other hand, such ordeals often occasion deplorable miscarriages of justice, and result in the conviction of innocent persons, who, strong in the knowledge of their innocence, fondly believe that the natural course of things will be reversed in their favour[2].

[1] As trial by ordeal is one of the principal features in Hindu jurisprudence, I have given a more detailed account of it in Appendix VI.—DUBOIS.

[2] This method of deciding a case, degrading example as it is of the foolish beliefs of which the human mind is capable, was common enough amongst all ancient heathen nations. Indeed it was still in existence in most Christian countries till the thirteenth century. In the belief that it was impossible, even in the most barbarous ages, for the obvious abuses of this system to have escaped the eyes of the judges who were bound to uphold it, some people have suggested that, while the long ceremonious prayers and exorcisms which

A certain young woman who lived close to my house became the victim of her husband's jealous suspicions. To prove her innocence, he forced her to plunge her arm up to the elbow into a bath of boiling oil. The unhappy woman, sure of her inviolable virtue, did not hesitate to obey, and the result was that she was most frightfully scalded. The wound became inflamed and blistered, finally mortified, and caused the unhappy woman's death.

No doubt the disregard of the sanctity of an oath prevailing among the Hindus has, to a certain extent, necessitated the adoption of this system of trial by ordeal.

Certain it is that there is no nation in the world who think so lightly of an oath or of perjury. The Hindu will fearlessly call upon all his gods—celestial, terrestrial, and infernal—to witness his good faith in the least of his undertakings; but should fresh circumstances demand it, he would not have the smallest scruple in breaking the word that he had so solemnly pledged. Woe to the imprudent person who confides to Hindus any private matter that affects his fortune, his honour, or his life! If it served their purpose, they would divulge it without any hesitation.

The unscrupulous manner in which Hindus will perjure themselves is so notorious that they are never called upon to make a statement on oath in their own courts of justice, unless they are persons who bear an exceptionally high character [1].

preceded the ordeals were going on, the judges were able to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused by their demeanour, and that in the former case they left them to the ordeal, while in the latter they found means, either by the application of medicines or drugs or by some other trickery, to ensure their passing through the ordeal safe and sound. It appears moreover that Hindu judges used to protect by other means the accused who were to undergo any dangerous ordeal. Thus, for instance, in some provinces, if a stolen object was of small value, such as a gold ornament, the judges would order a vessel full of water to be brought, and each suspected person received a smaller vessel of soft clay, which he had to place in the larger vessel. These soft earthen vessels were easily dissolved in the water, and the lost property was generally found at the bottom. Thus the culprit escaped undiscovered, and there was no need for the ordeal to take place.—DUBOIS.

The detection of crime by ordeal is not entirely dead even now. But it is not, of course, recognized in the regular courts, and in fact is illegal. —ED.

[1] In *India: What can it teach us?* Professor Max Müller defends with no little skill the general credibility of the Hindus. He quotes, *inter alios*, Sir

But the jurisprudence of the Hindus, like the rest of their political institutions, has undergone a complete change since a great European Power has dominated the country. Regular courts of justice have been established at great expense in every district to protect the rights and settle the differences of persons of all classes, irrespective of rank, position, and caste. And this is, undoubtedly, one of the greatest benefits that a just and enlightened Government can bestow on any country. However much opinions may differ as to the usages of these courts, it seems to me that no one can deny that they have already been productive of immense benefit. Nowadays every member of society can rest assured that, sooner or later, the wrongs under which he suffers, either in his person or his property, will be redressed, and he can also rely unreservedly upon the impartiality of his judges, an advantage he was far from enjoying under the iron rule of his former despotic masters. At the same time, it must be admitted that the present judicial system has by no means realized all the objects for which it was established. Indeed, how could any one reasonably expect that such a huge measure of reform would be sealed with perfection from its very commencement? Every creation of the human brain can always be improved upon when the light of experience has shown up its defects and revealed the mistakes that have been committed. For example, the fact cannot be disguised that the slow and cautious method of procedure which is customary in a European court of law is by no means adapted to the majority of Hindus, who from their straitened circumstances and the nature of their occupations cannot afford such long and expensive modes of litigation. Is it likely that they would find it convenient to wait about at the place where justice is dispensed, it may be for many days, till their turn to be heard comes, leaving, as they must, in the mean time their families without any means of subsistence? From this point of view the new system is all to the advantage of the rich and influential and to the detriment of the poor, against whom the former can bring vexatious suits

John Malcolm, who asserted: 'I have hardly ever known, where a person did understand the language, or where a calm communication was made to a native of India through a well-informed and trustworthy medium, that the result did not prove that what had at first been stated as falsehood had either proceeded from fear or from misapprehension.'—ED.

with impunity. So great is the dread amongst the poorer Hindus of these lengthy processes, and of the prolonged absences from their homes which they entail, that when they are cited to appear as witnesses before these new tribunals, they will often spend large sums in bribing the official who brings the summons, if any means whatever can be found by which they can elude the hateful business. If brawls or quarrels arise in a village, the neighbours, far from interposing and trying to restore peace, retire promptly to their own houses, terribly afraid lest they may be called as witnesses in court, and thus waste much precious time which otherwise might be profitably employed in the fields or in the house.

The conclusion to be drawn from this seems to be that under the new system of judicial administration sufficient attention has not been paid to the peculiar character, disposition, and prejudices of the people for whose benefit it was devised. It was not sufficiently borne in mind that nowhere in the whole world is there another race of men so obstinate, so deceitful, and so litigious as the Hindus, partly from faults of training and partly from their deep-seated attachment to caste customs. What we should think trifles appear to them of the utmost importance, and are often the cause of lawsuits. I defy the most active, zealous, and intelligent judge, especially in view of the enormous tract of country over which he has to administer justice—I defy him, I repeat, to hear one-fifth of the grievances, either real or imaginary, which people are ready to pour into his ears. Three-fourths at least of the legal proceedings have to do with the most petty concerns, though they are far from being regarded as such by the complainants. They are usually about small debts, quarrels, slanders, trifling assaults without bloodshed, petty larceny, &c. The settlement of these small matters might very well be removed from the jurisdiction of the higher courts and placed in the hands of village *panchayats* or petty courts of arbitration, composed of the best materials available; or they might, in part at any rate, be left to the village headmen, whose judgements in either case would be expeditious and without appeal. It could certainly not be expected that these subordinate courts would fulfil their duties with very scrupulous integrity or strict impartiality; but the parties concerned would always have as compensation for the small injustices of which

they might now and then be the victims the immense advantage of not losing their time or being put to an expense which more often than not is out of all proportion to the value of the matter in dispute.

Of the penalties sanctioned by the European courts of justice, imprisonment for debt, amongst others, strikes the Hindus as a ridiculous expedient, and it is one at which they often laugh. To be deprived of liberty without any additional coercion or torture appears to them no punishment at all. Any Hindu who has sufficient private means would be quite contented never to leave his house night or day; he would be in a state of indolent repose, chewing betel, smoking his pipe, eating, drinking, and sleeping without taking the least interest in what was going on in the world outside.

There are two classes of persons who are imprisoned for debt: *firstly*, those who are fraudulent debtors, who can pay, but refuse to do so, and whom torture alone would bring to their senses; and, *secondly*, those who are absolutely insolvent. The first of these two classes will go to prison with the utmost indifference, while the second are positively delighted to be sent there, because the aggrieved party is obliged to feed them while they are in prison. And what can be more pleasing to Hindus than to be maintained in idleness? It must be borne in mind that most Hindus, when they borrow money, do so with the lurking hope that circumstances will arise, or that they will think of some expedient, by which they will be able to elude repayment. Thus strong measures have to be resorted to as the only means by which payment can be exacted from such very unscrupulous debtors. When the time for payment comes and the creditor demands his money, the debtor declares he has none and begs for further grace, swearing by all his gods that he will pay everything, capital and interest, at the time stipulated. More time is granted, once and even twice, and each time the debtor's fine promises end in smoke. At last the creditor becomes tired of these interminable delays, grows angry, and arrests the debtor in the name either of the ruler of the country or of the governor of the province[1]. The creditor

[1] This method of arrest is very common. 'I arrest you,' one Hindu will say to another, 'in the name of the King or the East India Company, or in the name of the Collector of the district,' &c. The person to whom the

forbids his debtor to eat or drink without his permission, and at the same time he himself is bound to fast. If this method does not succeed, the creditor places a huge stone on the debtor's head and a similar one on his own, and thus burdened they remain motionless opposite each other, exposed to the heat of the sun; or they walk till one of them faints from exhaustion; or they both stand on one foot like cranes; or sometimes the creditor seizes the debtor's cattle and shuts them up, forbidding any one to feed them until payment has been made in full. At last the debtor is so worried that he is unable to bear it any longer; he comes to terms, pays a large sum on account, and gives good security for the remainder. Creditor and debtor then part on the best of terms. Very often the creditor is so hard pushed himself that he is obliged to relinquish a part of what is due to him in order to get back some of his money.

Is it likely, I may ask, that men who carry obstinacy and tenacity to such lengths would be alarmed at the prospect of enjoying a few idle weeks in prison?

The only object of a prison, according to the Hindus, is to prevent the accused or the criminal running away. No disgrace is attached to imprisonment, and consequently it is no punishment at all. In fact mere imprisonment is not looked upon as a punishment even by magistrates in native provinces. Every one condemned to prison has to undergo more or less severe torture according to the gravity of his offence. If it is but a trifling misdemeanour, the delinquent is beaten and then set at liberty.

All intelligent Hindus are agreed that the penal laws introduced by Europeans into their country err considerably on the side of leniency. They consider them quite inadequate to protect society against evil-doers. To keep peace and order amongst a nation constituted like the Hindus, they say, much harsher measures must be resorted to.

Even capital punishment appears to produce no impression whatever on these apathetic people. The sight of an execution,

summons is addressed is obliged to obey it, to leave his business, and to place himself at the disposal of his adversary. If he attempted to escape, he would render himself liable to be punished for contempt of the law.—DUBOIS.

No such private arrests are now permitted by law.—ED.

far from moving the spectators to feelings of pity or compassion, is only looked upon as an amusement; and they are even much diverted by the convulsive contortions of the poor wretch who is hanging on the gallows. Perhaps the utter want of feeling shown by the crowd under these circumstances was one of the reasons why native princes so rarely resorted to capital punishment. Probably they reflected that punishments were inflicted quite as much for the sake of their deterrent effect on others as for the chastisement of the guilty. Mutilation appeared to them to be a much more efficacious way of repressing vice. Criminals deprived of nose, ears, or right hand, dragging out their miserable existence before the eyes of all men, were living and lasting witnesses of the severity of the law, and their woeful appearance served as a daily example to others. See, they seemed to say to every passer-by, what a sad fate awaits those who break the laws!

The death penalty, on the other hand, barely excites a passing terror, and I very much doubt whether the fear of it ever restrained any Hindu who was bent on committing a crime.

CHAPTER IX

The Military System of the Hindus.—Ancient and Modern Methods of Warfare.—The Material formerly composing their Armies.—The Military Game of Chess invented by the Hindus.—*Poligars.*—Different Weapons that have been in Use at various Times in India.

HERE my self-imposed task should have been brought to a close, for it is hardly to be expected that I can treat the subject-matter of this chapter satisfactorily, seeing how foreign it is to my profession. However, as nearly all the public monuments of India, both civil and religious, commemorate some war, and as all the Hindu books are filled with descriptions of feats of arms and accounts of battles, I thought that a few details on this subject would not be entirely out of place in such a work as the present.

The Kshatriyas, or kings, and their descendants the Rajputs formerly held undisputed sway in India, and they alone had a right to follow the military profession. All this, however, has nowadays undergone a complete change, ambition having found a way through this hard and fast rule. At the present time there are very few native rulers who belong to the old, warrior caste. In this case, as in many others, the strongest have seized the reins of government. Indeed, in many provinces one may find princes of very low origin, who by their courage, their talents, or their intrigues have raised themselves to their high position. In the same way the profession of arms has now been thrown open to men of all castes, from the Brahmin to the Pariah. On the one hand one may see a Brahmin who has attained the rank of commander-in-chief of an army, while on the other hand, especially in the Mahratta armies, you may see them serving as common troopers.

Though the habits of the Hindus appear more likely to impair their courage than to make them good soldiers, the art of war nevertheless seems to have been as well understood by them from very early times as any other, and those who followed the military profession have always been held in high esteem. In fact, military officers took rank in the social scale immediately after the priesthood. The Brahmins themselves, actuated by motives either of gratitude or of self-interest, allowed them to participate in some of their own high prerogatives, such as the valued privileges of being allowed to hear the Vedas read and of wearing the triple cord. But however much the Hindus may have honoured the profession of arms, and however full their national histories may be of wars, conquests, sieges, battles, victories, and defeats, it is nevertheless remarkable that no nation has shown at every epoch in its history so little skill in military science. When pitiless conquerors, at the head of savage and warlike hordes, forced their way over the northern mountains and spread themselves like a devastating torrent over the fertile provinces of India, the peaceable and docile inhabitants were unable to offer any effectual resistance. They saw their towns and villages ravaged by fire and sword, while rivers of blood, ingloriously and fruitlessly spilt, deluged their fields. The readiness with which they bent their necks beneath their oppressors' yoke, and the feebleness of the efforts which they put forth to recover their independence, proved how inferior they were in courage and discipline to the proud Tartars who invaded and conquered them.

The wars of India may be classified under three heads: those of the mythical ages, those of the ancient kings, and those of modern times. By the last I mean only the internecine wars between native princes before the time when these princes, convinced of the superiority of European military science, determined to introduce foreigners amongst their troops, and to this end enlisted in their service those European adventurers who offered to help them in their undertakings. It was an imprudent policy, and the native princes did not see until too late the danger of surrounding themselves with such intriguing and ambitious auxiliaries.

I will say nothing about the wars of the gods and the giants, which the majority of Hindu books describe with equal

bombast and prolixity. Such exaggerated flights of imagination can hardly be considered worthy of a place in serious history. It is always the same story of armies of giants whose heads touched the stars, and who were mounted on elephants of proportionate size. One of these giants, for example, is depicted as upheaving the very firmament with his shoulders, giving it such a violent shock as to overthrow all the gods who dwelt therein, and thereby warning them of what they might expect from an adversary of such prowess. On the other hand, a god who is about to engage these formidable enemies takes the earth for his chariot, a rainbow for his bow, and Vishnu for an arrow. He shoots this extraordinary missile, and with one shot overthrows an immense city, in which all the villains that he is pursuing are entrenched, burying them all in the fallen ruins of the city.

Ab uno disce omnes. I do not think that the history of the wars of the ancient kings of India is one whit less absurd. It is only the poets who have undertaken the task of transmitting details to posterity, and as Hindu poets are not wont to do things by halves, they have freely availed themselves of the privilege of exaggeration and embellishment. Facts are so interwoven with foolish and senseless efforts of the imagination that it is impossible to disentangle the truth. Why should one feel astonished at Xerxes being able to gather together and maintain a million soldiers when he set forth to conquer Greece? Such an army would have formed only a small detachment of one of the armies of the kings of India. These latter never took the field at the head of less than several hundreds of millions of fighting men! If the reader will recollect what I have remarked several times, namely, that only that which is extraordinary and extravagant has the power of pleasing the Hindu, he will hardly be astonished at the strange mania which has induced Hindu authors to carry exaggeration even to puerility. In every country writers adapt their work to the taste of the public, being anxious to gain from them the greatest possible approbation. The maxim

> 'Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est aimable,

would be rank heresy in good Hindu literature.

The one fact that I have been able to glean for certain is that the armies of the ancient Hindu kings were divided into four

arms or sections, of which the whole formed a *chatur-angam*. These four corps were the elephants, the chariots, the cavalry, and the infantry. Such, indeed, were the component parts of the army of Porus, who was vanquished and taken prisoner on the banks of the Hydaspes by Alexander.

No one at the present day denies the fact that the Hindus invented the military game of chess[1].

It is very evident that it was the composition and tactics of the ancient Hindu armies that originally suggested the game. The Hindus, in fact, called it *chatur-angam*. Though with some few small variations we have adopted their method of playing, it must be admitted that the innovations which we have introduced in the shapes and names of the pieces are certainly not happy. What can be more ridiculous than the castles which move about from place to place, the queen who rushes about fighting with the king's people, or the bishops who occupy such an exalted position?

As with us, the most important piece on the Hindu chess-

[1] The following is the story, according to Oriental writers, of how this game was invented. At the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian era a very powerful young monarch was reigning in India, who was of excellent character, but who allowed himself to be corrupted by flatterers. This prince soon forgot that the love of the people is the only sure support of a throne. The Brahmins and Rajahs uttered many remonstrances, but in vain. Intoxicated by his greatness, which he fancied was unassailable, he despised their counsels. Accordingly a Brahmin named Sissa undertook to open the young monarch's eyes by strategy. To this end he invented the game of chess, in which the king, though the most important of all the pieces, can nevertheless neither attack nor defend himself without the assistance of his subjects. This game speedily became famous, and the king expressed his anxiety to learn it. Sissa while teaching him the rules, made him realize some important truths which up to that time he had failed to grasp, and the monarch wishing to show his gratitude to the Brahmin asked him what he would like as a reward. Sissa replied that he would be satisfied with as much rice as could be placed on the sixty-four squares of the chess-board by putting one grain on the first, two on the second, four on the third, and so on, the number on each square always doubling. The king cheerfully agreed to such an apparently modest demand. But the treasurers soon convinced their master that he had pledged himself to an act of munificence which, in spite of all his treasure and vast estates, he would be quite unable to fulfil. Sissa at once seized the opportunity of pointing out to the monarch how easy it was to abuse the best intentions of a sovereign if he were not perpetually on his guard against those who surrounded him.—DUBOIS.

board is the king[1]. The second piece, which we call the queen[2], they term the *mantri*, a title which signifies a minister of state, who is also commander-in-chief of the army. Chariots[3] occupy the place of our bishops. Like us, the Hindus have knights, but instead of our battlemented castles they have elephants[4]. The pawns or foot-soldiers are, as with us, the simple rank and file of which the army is composed. The chess-board is called by the Hindus the *por-sthalam*, or field of battle.

But to return to the ancient Hindu armies. In the first line came the elephants. It is certain that these animals carried castles or howdahs on their backs, containing several men armed with javelins. But I think it would be wrong to suppose that these castles or howdahs were of any great size, as might be imagined from certain illustrations. Like those which may still be found in the present day amongst the armies of some Eastern princes, these towers or howdahs resembled large boxes without lids, as long and as broad as a large bed, placed crosswise on the back of the elephant, and capable of holding six or seven archers when sitting in Oriental fashion. Though an elephant is very strong, so as to be able to carry two small cannons and their carriages, there is nevertheless a limit to its powers; and naturally a much larger erection, with a still larger number of men in it, would be a burden under which even an elephant would succumb. And there is yet another point, namely, the difficulty of fixing a lofty structure with any degree of security on an elephant's back, a difficulty which would be rendered practically insurmountable by the brusque movements and rolling gait of the animal. Be this as it may, elephants in days gone by were formidable adversaries amongst these half-disciplined nations. They broke the ranks, frightened the horses, trampled the soldiers underfoot; and at the same time it was very difficult to wound them, on account of their hard and horny epidermis. These powerful creatures are still employed in the armies

[1] The Arab and Persian name for chess is 'the king's game.'—DUBOIS.

[2] In Low Latin this piece was called *fercia*, from the Persian *fers*, which means *minister of state, visir*.—DUBOIS.

[3] In many Eastern countries these are elephants.—DUBOIS.

[4] Amongst other Asiatic nations these are camels ridden by a man with a bow and arrow in his hand.—DUBOIS.

of native princes, but rather from ostentation than from any warlike purpose that they serve. A native general or senior officer considers an elephant to be the only mount befitting his dignity; the animal being usually covered with magnificent trappings. It is only with great difficulty that elephants can be made to stand fire, though every method is employed to familiarize them with it. Without these precautions the rattle of firearms and the squibs that are hurled at them would excite them to frenzy, and would consequently cause the death of their riders.

They were also used for battering the gates of besieged towns; and it was with a view to counteracting this that most of the gates were thickly studded on the outside with long and stout iron spikes.

In the Mogul armies, before the introduction of European tactics, an elephant always marched in the van, bearing on its head a long pole, from which floated a large flag. Sometimes this was followed by another elephant carrying a rich howdah, on which was placed a box containing a priceless relic, which usually was, if one may believe it, an actual hair from Mahomet's beard.

The chief service which these animals render nowadays is in the transport of artillery and equipage. When a swamp, a ditch, a canal, or any other obstacle arrests the progress of the bullocks that drag the cannon, one or more elephants are brought up to push the gun-carriage with their heads and trunks and thus help them over the difficulty. When rivers which are not fordable have to be crossed, elephants are often used to carry men and heavy baggage over on their backs. But the services of these animals are dearly bought, considering the vast expense which their food and keep entail. Thus they are falling more and more into disuse. Every day the camel is growing in favour as being more patient and tractable.

Chariots formed the second division of the ancient Hindu armies. If one may believe what early Hindu writers say, these chariots were used in considerable numbers and were of considerable size. That of the king was the most magnificent. The rest belonged to his subordinate chiefs. When two hostile armies met, the leaders on each side were in the habit of interchanging compliments with each other before joining battle. One, for instance, would drop an arrow just short of his

adversary's chariot, and the other would return the salute. Splendid horses were harnessed to these war-chariots. One reads in the *Bhagavata* that one of the old kings of India, when setting out on a campaign, harnessed a troop of demons to his chariot, to ensure the pace being good. The chariots were usually ornamented all round with large bells, which made a great noise, and this custom is still occasionally observed at the present time in the case of private carriages. The latter, however, in no way resemble the ancient war-chariots, about which I have not been able to collect any trustworthy information.

The cavalry formed the third division. Indian generals in ancient times, however, did not rely much on this arm. The infantry played the principal part in their wars, which is contrary to the practice of more modern times, for until quite recently no use whatever was made of infantry, only a few undisciplined regiments of followers being maintained to pillage, ravage, and destroy all the villages in their way, and to devastate the enemy's country. This idea they had evidently borrowed from the Tartars, who had invaded their country, and whose superiority in arms they had been forced to acknowledge to their cost.

The Moguls and Mahrattas, the two rival powers who for a long while disputed the supremacy of India, placed on some occasions as many as 100,000 horse in the field. The Mahratta princes combined could have commanded as many as 300,000 horse. But they never knew how to utilize this unwieldy multitude to its full advantage, because they did not understand how to manœuvre it in a scientific manner. The lessons which the European invaders gave them time after time, for more than 300 years, seem hardly to have taught them to appreciate their mistakes. Even at the end of this long period, and when it was too late to mend matters, there was a vast inferiority in their tactics compared with those of their dreaded opponents. They never could be brought to understand the value of strict discipline, good tactical handling, orderly arrangements in marching and camping, and, in short, all the skilled dispositions by which it is possible to manœuvre large bodies of troops without confusion. They thought their work was done when they had collected a miscellaneous horde of men,

who marched to battle in a disorderly mass and fell upon the enemy without any method or concerted plan.

Indian armies always contain a large number of chiefs who command as many troopers as they are able to raise at their own expense. Each recruit brings his own horse, which remains his private property. He receives a fixed sum for himself and for the keep of his horse. If he happens to lose his horse, he is dismissed as useless. This plan certainly puts the State to little expense, but it renders the cavalry as a body less effective, for at close quarters the rider's first care is for his horse, which belongs to himself; nay, often, when he sees that there is much danger, he will take to flight at the first order to charge. Desertion indeed is very common in the armies of Indian princes. As a rule, little trouble is taken to catch deserters; nor are they severely punished when caught. In order to ensure fidelity amongst their troops the chiefs are in the habit of keeping their pay in arrear; and this prevents a large number of mercenaries from deserting, as they fear to lose what is due to them. Nevertheless, whole armies have been known to throw down their arms in face of the enemy and refuse to take them up again until they had received their pay. It is by no means a rare occurrence for large bodies of troops to refuse to set out on a march for a similar reason. Mutinous soldiers, too, frequently put their generals under arrest, send them to prison, menace them sword in hand, or try to intimidate them by loud threats and insults. The generals, strange to say, will calmly and patiently put up with these mutinous outbursts. Usually they will pay the mutineers a part of their arrears and promise the rest in a short time. Quiet is then restored, and the men return to duty until another such occasion presents itself.

Although these undisciplined mercenaries make very inferior troops, still there are instances on record of honourable and brave conduct among their chiefs, especially among Mahomedan chiefs of high rank. The latter never cry for quarter; and, even when the day is going against them, they will not retreat a step as long as they have the support of a few of their followers. Flight or retreat under such circumstances is considered by them even more ignominious than it is by their European opponents.

The ordinary cavalry troopers, be they Mahomedan or Mahratta, are usually very badly mounted, and their equipments are still worse. Nevertheless, their weedy-looking chargers are so inured to fatigue and so accustomed to privation that they will make, with only a little coarse hay for food, a succession of forced marches which would be quite beyond the capabilities of our best European cavalry, covering as they sometimes do as much as sixty miles a day. Mounted on these wretched animals, detachments of troops are able to cover great distances, and to sweep down suddenly on districts from which they were supposed to be far away. It must not be supposed that there are not very good horses to be found, especially in the Southern provinces of India; but they are only to be bought for very high prices that are quite beyond the means of ordinary persons. Only the chiefs possess really fine horses. They take remarkably good care of them. They usually decorate them in various ways, and often paint their bodies in different colours. They train them in an extremely clever manner, and ride them most gracefully. Many indeed would be able to carry off prizes in our European riding-schools. The Mahrattas, for instance, accustom their horses to stop at a given signal. The rider dismounts and goes away, leaving his steed loose. Sometimes for hours together the animal will remain as still as a milestone until his master returns. A horse-stealer who one day came across a solitary steed, which had thus been left without any one to look after it, mounted it and galloped off. The owner of the horse, seeing from a distance what had happened, thereupon gave the call by which he always stopped the animal. At the sound of its master's voice the horse perceived its mistake and stood stock still. In spite of every effort on the part of the thief it refused to budge; whereupon the latter thought it more prudent to take to flight on his own two legs.

The troopers, Mahomedan and Mahratta, are armed with lances, javelins, and *katharis*, or daggers. Some few have blunderbusses in addition, while others have indifferent sabres. A few may be seen armed with nothing but the whip or switch which they use in urging on their horses. Each man, in short, is expected to arm himself at his own expense, and consequently a remarkable variety may be noticed in the equipments of a troop of native cavalry.

They march in the most irregular fashion, and have no idea of regular military movements. Indeed, any such knowledge would be of little or no use to them, for they very rarely take part in a pitched battle. All their campaigns are reduced to mere skirmishes and constant surprises on one side or the other, in which very little blood is shed. The chief operations of native armies are confined to ravaging the country that they happen to be passing through, without distinction of friend or foe, and pillaging without mercy all the defenceless inhabitants, who are put to inconceivable tortures in the attempt to force them to disgorge imaginary treasure that they never possess.

The infantry is, if possible, in even a worse plight; or at any rate it was up to the time when native princes were induced to admit European adventurers into their service, to reorganize and drill their armies.

The ancient kings of India placed most reliance on their infantry. It formed the fourth division of their armies, and was numerically larger than the other three. It formed, in fact, the main strength of the combined forces. At the present day, too, it constitutes the principal, and indeed almost the only, force of the smaller native princes who are known by the name of *Poligars*[1]. These *Poligars* rarely have any cavalry, the smallness of their revenues and the character of the country they inhabit rendering it almost impossible to maintain them.

The *Poligars* in many respects resemble the European barons of the Middle Ages, who from their strongholds ventured boldly to defy the royal authority. They are fairly numerous in the various districts of the Peninsula, and they were much more numerous before the great European Power extended its dominion over the territories in which they were established and subdued the greater number of them. These petty despots waged almost incessant war against each other. Safely ensconced in deep jungles or on inaccessible mountain-tops, they were able to defy the princes whose territories surrounded them; and the latter, unable to suppress these turbulent vassals for fear that they would pillage and devastate their own states, tried to live amicably with them.

These *Poligars* or self-styled princes made war according to

[1] These inhabit the southern districts of the Peninsula.—ED.

methods of their own. The use of cannon was unknown to them; their only arms being arrows, pikes, and flint-locks. They never risked a pitched battle. When attacked by a superior force they took refuge in their jungles or on their mountains. Their object would be to surprise the advancing enemy in some defile. Lying in ambush behind trees or thick brushwood, they would pour well-directed volleys upon their opponents, forcing them to retire in disorder with considerable loss. It was in the midst of their jungles or on the tops of their mountains that the English, after much labour and the loss of many men, managed to lay hands upon these brigand chiefs and their lawless followers. Only by these means were the new-comers able to restore peace and tranquillity in provinces which had previously been the scene of perpetual outrages.

The art of laying out camps is as little known to Indian generals as that of marching an army. The greatest confusion always reigns both in their encampments and on the march. When an army makes a halt, the most important point, of course, is to see that there is a good supply of water close at hand. This is not always to be found where it is wanted, especially at certain times of the year, and whole armies have been reduced to the direst straits by being temporarily deprived of this indispensable element, the want of which is much more keenly felt in a tropical climate than elsewhere.

An officer usually goes on ahead, selects a suitable site for the camp, and there sets up a large flag, which is visible from a long distance. Each division then encamps in any sort of order beyond this landmark. Each chief pitches his tent in the midst of his own followers, and hoists his distinctive banner. Confusion and disorder prevail everywhere. Things are, however, a little more orderly around the commander-in-chief's tent. Fairly good discipline is also maintained in the spot set apart as a market-place. Here provisions and commodities of various kinds, pillaged from the country through which the army has passed, are exposed for sale; for the progress of an Indian army is always attended by fire, sword, and robbery. In fact, it is considered unnecessary and troublesome to establish regular depôts for provisions, or in fact to make commissariat arrangements of any kind. It was only when an army was obliged to pass through a country which had already been devastated

that these precautions were considered necessary. Strings of bullocks were then employed with the army to carry its provisions. At all other times the chiefs relied for their commissariat on a crowd of purveyors attracted by the hope of gain, and especially on the *Lambadis,* or *Sukalers,* professional pillagers, whom I have already described, and who kept the camp market well supplied by their continual raids on the unfortunate inhabitants of the surrounding country.

The most abominable debauchery is openly authorized among the soldiery, especially in Mahomedan armies. A special quarter in the camp is set apart for the vile and depraved wretches who give themselves up to this hideous form of prostitution.

Charlatans of all kinds swarm in these disorderly camps. There are conjurers, soothsayers, astrologers, tight-rope dancers, acrobats, quacks, pickpockets, fakirs, religious mendicants, blind men; and furthermore, each soldier is generally followed by his whole family. Thus you may often see an army of from twenty-five to thirty thousand soldiers with three hundred thousand followers of all sorts and conditions in its train, who, profiting by the confusion which reigns in the camp, devote their whole time to robbery with impunity. The Mahratta armies are less troubled with these encumbrances, for they often make forced marches, and it would be impossible for the followers to keep up with them.

The generals' tents, especially in the case of Mahomedans, are very large and commodious. Oriental taste and luxury are conspicuous in them. They are richly adorned, and provided with every kind of comfort. They are divided into several compartments, some of which are destined for the wives or concubines of these pleasure-loving commanders, who are almost invariably accompanied by their women. Even in the midst of a tumultuous camp, Indian princes and generals never neglect anything that can pander to their sensuality.

One may well believe that it is easy to surprise a camp composed of such a rabble. There are rarely any outposts. The spies who are maintained in the hostile camp partly supply this deficiency; for, as soon as they perceive anything unusual going on, they hurry off to warn their employers, who are thus prepared to receive the enemy. The latter usually retire as soon as they perceive that their opponents are on the alert.

Moreover, surprises and night marches are not at all to the taste of Indian warriors, who do not like to be deprived of their sleep. Thus it has sometimes happened that a mere handful of Europeans has thrown into disorder and routed a whole army by unexpected attacks of this nature.

Nevertheless, however inferior the people of India may be in discipline and courage, they have one great advantage over Europeans, which, had they only known how to make use of it, would certainly have rendered the struggle between them and their formidable adversaries much less unequal. I mean their extreme temperance in eating and drinking. Give an Indian soldier three or four pounds of rice per week with a little salt, and on that, with the addition of a little water, he will keep himself in good health, be active, cheerful, and in condition to undertake forced marches for several days consecutively, without suffering any inconvenience. What a fund of latent force the Indian armies possessed in this useful faculty for the purpose of harassing and annoying an enemy whom they were afraid to meet in pitched battles, but who, infinitely less abstemious, would soon have become disheartened without a plentiful supply of substantial food!

The art of fortifying, besieging, and defending strongholds was equally neglected in India. The method generally followed was to invest a town and trust to famine to force the besieged to capitulate. To take a place by assault appeared far too dangerous a proceeding to Indian tacticians; consequently it frequently happened that a wretched little fortified town, surrounded by nothing but mud walls and defended by a few hundred peasants armed with a few worn-out matchlocks, was able to hold out for months against the attacks of a host of assailants, who, tired out at last by the perseverance of their adversaries, were obliged to ignominiously raise the siege. Even in recent times, though they might have learnt by sad experience to what horrors a town taken by assault is exposed, several Indian generals have been known to shut themselves up behind walls of mere mud or earth, and obstinately refuse to listen to any suggestion of capitulation, treating the European besiegers with insolent bravado, and fearlessly awaiting the chances of an assault.

It is true, however, that the honour of the commandant of

any fortress is at stake on such occasions. However advantageous the conditions offered to him might be, he would never willingly capitulate; for should he be weak enough to do so, he would find it difficult to escape the suspicion, on the part of his king and of the people, that he had acted with treachery or cowardice, and consequently his good name would be for ever tarnished.

Nevertheless, the art of approaching a fortified position by mines and entrenchments has long been known to Indian generals. When such works have been carried as close to the main fortress as possible, the besieged and the besiegers delight in insulting and challenging each other by word of mouth. For instance, the Hindus will say to the Mahomedans: 'If you do not now take the place, it will be as great a slur on your good name as if you had eaten pork.' And the besiegers will answer: 'If we take the place, it will be as great a disgrace to you as if you had eaten cow's flesh.' Another proof that bluster is no indication of courage.

A device upon which Indians place great reliance under such circumstances is enchantment. The magicians of either party are called upon to exercise all the resources of their black art. But unfortunately the sorcerers of the besiegers are nearly always as clever as the sorcerers of the besieged. One charm is consequently nullified by a countercharm, and it comes to the same thing in the end, namely, which side is able to display the greater amount of courage and skill. Whatever the result may be, however, the magicians always enjoy a large share of the glory of success or bear the greater part of the shame of defeat. These absurd illusions were still in vogue when I left India.

The fortifications of the most important strongholds, even up to recent times, consisted of one or two very thick walls with round or triangular towers at the angles, on which were placed a few guns very badly served. The fort was surrounded by a broad and deep moat, but as the natives of India did not understand the use of the drawbridge, the ditch was spanned by a road leading to the main entrance, which was hidden by a curtain wall to prevent its being visible from a distance.

In several places in the Peninsula strongholds may be seen which owe little of their strength to the skill of the engineer, being situated on the top of steep and almost inaccessible hills. These

fortresses are called *durgams*. Alexander besieged a fortress of this kind on the banks of the Indus, and found great difficulty in capturing it[1]. But there is one great drawback to these *durgams*. The air is always cold and damp, even when extreme heat prevails in the plains below, and this renders them most unhealthy to live in, the men who garrison them being subject to long spells of fever which are difficult to cure.

The people of India have lately learnt from Europeans the warlike art of exterminating the human species in a more scientific and practical manner. They have introduced great changes in their methods of attack and defence, and, in fact, in the whole of their military system. A sad and fatal gift, which they may perhaps one day use against those who brought it to them!

Before finishing this subject I will add a few words on the different kinds of weapons that have been used in India at different times. I have already mentioned that there are thirty-two different kinds of old-fashioned weapons, each of which has a name and shape peculiar to itself. Models of these are to be found in the hands of the principal idols. Each deity is provided with the one that he most affected. As my readers would find no counterpart to them in a European armoury, it would be difficult to describe them without illustrations. All that I can say about them is that besides many instruments for cutting, there were others for hacking, stabbing, and felling.

Among Indian arms of more modern times the most important defensive ones are the helmet and the shield. The latter is made of leather, and ornamented in the centre with large bosses. Most Indian soldiers can use it very skilfully. Some wear a thick-quilted corselet as a cuirass or breast-plate, which, it is said, is impervious both to sword and arrow[2]. But as this breast-plate affords no protection against a bullet and is undeniably most uncomfortable to wear in a hot climate, its use has been almost entirely abandoned. Among the offensive weapons of India are bows and arrows. The bow measures only about two feet and a half when strung, and each arrow is nearly two

[1] See Quintus Curtius, viii. 11.—DUBOIS.

[2] The Greeks, and Romans, and many other nations of old used this sort of cuirass, but they also wore metal ones of different shapes.—DUBOIS.

feet long. These are but poor specimens of the weapons which history credits the Hindu gods with using. The bow used by Rama, for instance, was so enormous that the fifty thousand men who were employed to bring it to him succumbed beneath the burden. Vishnu's favourite weapon was the *chakram*, and many of his devotees have it branded on their shoulders with a red-hot iron. It is still used in some parts, and consists of a metal disk about nine or ten inches in diameter, with well-sharpened edges. There is a hole in the centre, and through this is passed a stick by means of which a rapid rotatory motion is given to the disk, which flies off and inflicts a severe cut on any one that it strikes.

Large grenades or squibs are also frequently used, eight or ten inches long, and armed at one end with a keen-edged crescent-shaped blade. These are fired off horizontally, and are used to produce confusion amongst bodies of cavalry. They are less effective than our hand grenades, but carry very much further. According to Hindu authors, these grenades, called *vanams*, were used in very early times. The *Ramayana* speaks of Rama's *vanam* as one of his most important weapons. It is therefore to be inferred that gunpowder was known in India in very early times. It is quite certain that the Hindus possessed the secret of compounding explosive substances long before the invasions of Tartars or Europeans. Still they can hardly have been aware of the terrible effect which these inflammable materials can produce when enclosed in a metal tube: it was reserved for those who conquered this peaceable nation to teach them the power of this agent of destruction.

The Hindus still use the pike, the dagger, and the sword. The last is at present their favourite weapon, and they have fencing-masters who can teach them to use it with great skill.

The gun is also much used by them, although in their hands it is not a very deadly weapon. Until quite recently they only used matchlocks, and their gunpowder was extremely bad, as indeed it is even at the present time. Amongst Hindu soldiers musketry practice is unknown, as their princes consider that it is a useless expense to employ powder for this purpose.

Europeans have recently introduced bronze and cast-iron cannon. In former times Indian cannon were made of iron, and were of enormous calibre. From these wretched guns

they fired stone balls more than a foot in diameter. They took no trouble whatever to learn how to aim. I have read in a manuscript written nearly eighty years ago that the Rajah of Tanjore, having declared war against the Dutch, sent an army to besiege their fortress at Negapatam. When it drew near, the Dutch fired an ill-directed salvo from the top of the ramparts. The Rajah's troops, observing that the balls passed well over their heads, thought that they had nothing more to fear from the enemy's artillery, and labouring under this delusion, they boldly approached the glacis. Just at that moment the garrison fired a few well-aimed volleys of grape-shot which annihilated the rash assailants, who learnt to their cost that a cannon can be aimed both above and below its true level. The author adds that the palanquin of a Brahmin who held a high command in the Rajah's army, and who had approached a little too close to the fortress, was struck by a cannon ball and shattered to pieces. The Brahmin got off scot-free with only a fright; but his alarm was so great that he ran off as fast as he could, and, when he found himself in a place of safety, swore by his three hundred and thirty million gods that never again would he venture within ten miles of any place inhabited by these dogs of Feringhis.

APPENDIX I

The Jains.—Differences between them and the Brahmins[1].

THE word Jain, or Jaina, is a compound word denoting a person who has given up living or thinking like other men *. A true Jain should entirely renounce all thoughts of self. He should rise superior to the scorn or opposition to which he may be subjected on account

[1] Jainism is a heretical offshoot of Buddhism, and presents resemblances to both Brahminism and Buddhism, which have been summarized as follows in Elphinstone's *History of India*: 'They agree with the Buddhas in denying the existence, or at least the activity and providence, of God; in believing in the eternity of matter; in the worship of deified saints; in their scrupulous care of animal life and all the precautions which it leads to; in disclaiming the divine authority of the Vedas; and in having no sacrifices and no respect for fire. They agree with the Buddhists also in considering a state of impassive abstraction as supreme felicity, and in all the doctrines which they hold in common with the Hindus. They agree with the Hindus in other points, such as division of caste. This exists in full force in the south and west of India, and can only be said to be dormant in the north-east, for, though the Jains there do not acknowledge the four classes of the Hindus, yet a Jain converted to the Hindu religion takes his place in one of the castes from which he must all along have retained the proofs of his descent, and the Jains themselves have numerous divisions of their own, the members of which are as strict in avoiding intermarriages and other intercourse as the four classes of the Hindus. Though they reject the scriptural character of the Vedas, they allow them great authority in all matters not at variance with their religion. The principal objections to them are drawn from the bloody sacrifices which they enjoin, and the loss of animal life which burnt-offerings are liable (though undesignedly) to occasion. They admit the whole of the Hindu gods, and worship some of them, though they consider them as entirely subordinate to their own saints, who are, therefore, the proper objects of adoration.'

The following is from Mr. J. A. Baines's Census Report for 1891:—

'A second offshoot from the earlier Brahminism is found in the Jain, a

* This is not the true etymology. Jina is 'one who has overcome human infirmities and passions'; and *Jaina*, appertaining to *Jina*.—POPE.

of his religion, the principles of which he must preserve and guard unaltered even to death, being fully persuaded that it is the one and only true religion on earth, that is, the true primitive religion which was given to all mankind.

In the course of time, the Jains say, the primitive religion gradually became considerably corrupted in several essential points, and was superseded by the superstitious and detestable sophistries of Brahminism. The ancient dogmas were forgotten or put aside by the Brahmins, who invented an entirely new system of religion, in which only a shadowy resemblance can be traced to the old Hindu faith.

It is the Brahmins who invented the four Vedas and the eighteen Puranas, the *Trimurti*, and the monstrous fables connected with it, such as the *Avatars* of Vishnu, the abominable *lingam*, the worship of the cow and other animals, the sacrifice of the *yagnam*, &c., &c. The Jains not only reject all these spurious additions, but look upon them with absolute horror.

The Brahmins introduced all these sacrilegious innovations very gradually. The Jains were formerly in close communion with the

form of belief that still subsists and flourishes in India to this day. Its origin is veiled from us, but it bears a strong family likeness to the earlier form of Buddhism, and it is a question amongst scholars whether it rose about the same time or a little earlier. At all events it seems to have been unpopular with the Buddhists, and to have diverged less from Brahmanic orthodoxy. The monastic system was not countenanced, but ritual was simplified and women were allowed to share in it. As in Buddhism, however, the larger section of the Jains decline to allow that women can attain *Nirvana*. The latter, however, is with them perpetual bliss, instead of complete annihilation. Caste amongst the Jains is maintained, and though they have no special reservation of the priesthood to a class, there is a general tendency in that direction, and in some cases Brahmins even are employed. In later years the Jai s seem to have competed with the Brahmins in literature and science, so that they fell into disfavour, and would very probably have succumbed but for the advent of the Mussulman power. In the north and west of India they are still a cultivated class, most engaged in commerce, whilst in the south, where they share with the Buddhists, who preceded them, the credit of forming the Canarese and Tamil literature, they are as a rule agriculturists. Except in a few of the larger cities of the north there seems to be little sectarian hostility between them and the orthodox; and in the west, where they are still closer in customs and observances, the line of division is scarcely traceable. In parts of both tracts there is, in the present day, a tendency for Jainism to regard itself as a sect of Brahminism, in spite of the non-recognition of the divine authority of the Veda. It is probable that in compliance with this tendency many have returned their religion as Hindu of the Jain sect, so that where sect is not separately compiled, as in the imperial series of returns, the total of the Jain religion is reduced by that number. As it is, the number of Jains is given as about 1,417,000.'

Brahmins both in faith and doctrine, but they opposed these changes from the very first with all their power. Then, seeing that their remonstrances produced no effect and that these religious innovations were daily making progress among the people, they found themselves reduced at last to the sad necessity of an open rupture with the Brahmins. The immediate cause of this rupture was the introduction of the *yagnam* sacrifice, at which some living creature must be immolated[1]. This, they contend, is directly opposed to the most sacred and inviolable principles of the Hindu religion, which forbids the destruction of any living thing, for any reason or on any pretext whatever.

From that moment things came rapidly to a climax; and it was then that the defenders of the pure primitive religion took the name of Jains, and formed themselves into a distinct sect, composed of Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras. They were the descendants of the Hindus of all castes who originally banded themselves together to oppose the innovations of the Brahmins, and they alone have preserved the religion of their forefathers intact to the present day.

After the schism the Jains, or true believers, perpetually taunted the Brahmins with their debased religion, and what at first merely furnished subject-matter for scholastic disputes finally became the cause of long and bloody hostilities. For a long time success was on the side of the Jains, but in the end, the majority of the Kshatriyas and other castes having seceded and adopted the innovations of the Brahmins, the latter gained the ascendant and reduced their adversaries to the lowest depths of subjection. They overthrew all the temples of the Jains, destroyed the objects of their cult, deprived them of all freedom, both religious and civil, and banished them from public employment and all positions of trust; in fact, they persecuted them to such an extent that they succeeded in removing nearly all traces of these formidable antagonists in several provinces where formerly they had been most flourishing.

When these persecutions and wars began is a question that I am unable to answer with any degree of accuracy; but it appears that they lasted a long time and only came to an end in comparatively recent times. Not more than four or five centuries ago the Jains exercised sovereign power in several provinces of the Peninsula. Nowadays the Brahmins are the masters everywhere; the Jains, on the other hand, are absolutely powerless, and it would be impossible to find one occupying a position of any importance. They have become merged in the lower middle classes. They devote themselves to agriculture, and even more to trade, which is the special

[1] It is generally a ram.—DUBOIS.

profession of the Vaisyas, among which caste the greater number of these sectarians are now to be found. Their principal trade is in kitchen and household utensils of copper and other metals.

There are very few of the Brahmin caste who hold the opinions of the Jains. There is a village, however, called Maleyur, in South Mysore, which contains between fifty and sixty families of them. They have a famous temple there, of which the *guru* is a Brahmin Jain. In the other more important temples of the Jains, such as those at Belgola, Madighery, and others, the *gurus* or priests are recruited from the Vaisyas, or merchants. The Vaisya Jains are regarded by the Brahmins of the same sect as *patitas*, or heretics, because they have thus usurped the priestly office, and also because they have altered the religion of the true Jains by introducing some of the innovations of their Brahmin adversaries[1]. This divergence of opinion, however, has not led to any serious differences between them.

The Jains are divided into several sects or schools, which differ on the subject of perfect happiness, and on the means of attaining it. One of these sects, known by the name of *Kashtachenda Swetambara*[2], teaches that there is no other *moksha*, that is to say, no other supreme blessedness, than that which is to be obtained from sensual pleasures, particularly that which is derived from sexual intercourse with women. This sect is, it is true, not numerous.

The school of the *Jaina-bassaru* is the most numerous, and it is subdivided into several others. Its tenets differ very little from those of the *Vedanta* school of Brahminism. It recognizes the different stages of meditation as taught by the latter, and enjoins very much the same means of attaining everlasting felicity, by which they understand reunion with the Godhead.

The Religious System of the Jains.

The Jains acknowledge one Supreme Being, to whom they give the names of *Jaineswara, Paramatma, Parapara-vastu*, and several others expressing the infinity of his nature.

It is to this Supreme Being alone that all the prayers and sacrifices of the true Jains are offered; and it is to him that all the marks of respect which they pay to their holy personages, known as *Saloka-purushas*, and to other sacred objects represented under a human form, are really addressed; for these, on attaining *moksha* (supreme blessedness) after death, have become united with and incorporated into the Supreme Being.

The Supreme Being is, they say, one and indivisible, a spirit

[1] *Patitas* literally means 'the fallen.' —Ed.

[2] *Swetambara* literally means 'clad in white.'—Ed.

without corporal parts or limitations. His four principal attributes are:—

1. *Ananta-gnanam*, infinite wisdom.

2. *Ananta-darsanam*, infinite intuition, omniscience, and omnipresence.

3. *Ananta-viryam*, omnipotence.

4. *Ananta-sukham*, infinite blessedness.

This noble being is entirely absorbed in the contemplation of his infinite perfections, and in the uninterrupted enjoyment of the happiness which he finds in his own essence. He has nothing in common with the things of this world, and does not interfere at all in the government of this vast universe. Virtue and vice, good and evil, are indifferent to him.

Virtue being essentially right, those who practise it in this world will find their reward in another life, either by a blessed reincarnation, or by immediate admittance to the delights of *Swarga*. Vice being essentially bad and wrong, those who give way to it will be punished in another world by an unhappy reincarnation. The worst offenders will go straight to *Naraka* after death, there to expiate their crimes. But in no case does God intervene in the distribution of punishments or rewards, or pay any attention to the good or evil done by men here below.

Matter is eternal and independent of the Godhead. That which exists now has always existed and will always exist.

And not only is matter eternal, but also the order and harmony which reign throughout the universe—the fixed and unchanging movements of the stars, the division of light from darkness, the succession and constant renewal of the seasons, the production and reproduction of animal and vegetable life, the nature and properties of the elements; in fact, all things visible are eternal, and will continue to exist just as they have existed from all time.

Metempsychosis.

The fundamental doctrine of the Jains is metempsychosis. Their belief in this differs in no way from that of the Brahmins. But they do not agree with the latter with regard to the four *lokas* or worlds. These they refuse to recognize. They also reject the three principal Abodes of Bliss—*Sattya-loka*, *Vaikuntha*, and *Kailasa*, that is to say, the paradises of Brahma, of Vishnu, and of Siva. They recognize three worlds only, which they describe by the generic name of *Jagat-triya*, and which are the *Urddhwa-loka* or superior world, the *Adha-loka* or inferior world, which they also call *Patala*, and the *Madhya-loka* or middle world, that is to say, the earth where mortals dwell.

Urddhwa-loka.

This world, which is also called *Swarga*, is the first of the *Jagat-triya*, and Devendra is lord of it. There are sixteen distinct abodes in it, in each of which a different degree of happiness is enjoyed in proportion to the merits of the righteous souls who are admitted. The first and highest of these habitations is the *Sadhu-dharma*. Only the very purest souls have access to this, and they there enjoy unbroken happiness for thirty-three thousand years. The *Achuda-karpa*, which is the last and lowest of the sixteen habitations, is destined for the souls of those who possess exactly the requisite amount of merit, neither more nor less, necessary to procure their admittance into the *Urddhwa-loka*. They there enjoy for one thousand years the amount of happiness which is their portion. In the other intermediate habitations the degree and duration of happiness are fixed in relative proportion to the merits of those who are admitted.

Women of the rarest beauty adorn these Abodes of Bliss. The blessed, however, have no intercourse with them. The sight alone of these enchanting beauties is sufficient to intoxicate their senses and plunge them into a perpetual ecstasy that is far superior to all mere earthly pleasures. In this respect the *Swarga* of the Jains differs little from that of the Brahmins.

On leaving the *Urddhwa-loka* at the expiration of the period assigned to them, the souls of the blessed are born again upon earth and recommence the process of transmigration.

The Adha-loka.

The second world of the *Jagat-triya* is the *Adha-loka*, also called *Naraka*, and sometimes *Patala*. It is the lower or inferior regions, the abode of great sinners: that is, of those whose crimes are so heinous and so manifold that they cannot be expiated by even the lowest forms of reincarnation.

The *Adha-loka* is divided into seven dwelling-places, in each of which the severity of the punishments is proportionate to the gravity of the offences. The least terrible is the *Retna-pravai*, where erring souls are tormented for a thousand consecutive years. The torture gradually increases in intensity and duration in the other abodes, until in the *Maha-damai-pravai*, the seventh, the punishments reach a point of awfulness which is beyond all description. It is there that the most villainous sinners are sent, and their horrible sufferings only terminate at the end of thirty-three thousand years. Women, who from their constitutional weakness are not able to endure such extremes of suffering, are never sent to this awful *Maha-damai pravai*, no matter how wicked they may have been.

THE MADHYA-LOKA.

The middle world, the *Madhya-loka*, is the third of the *Jagat-triya*. It is there that mortals live, and that both virtue and vice are to be found.

This world is one *reju* in extent, a *reju* being equal to the distance over which the sun travels in six months. *Jambu-Dwipa*, which is the earth on which we live, occupies only a small part of the *Madhya-loka*. It is surrounded on all sides by a vast ocean, and in the centre of it is an immense lake extending for a hundred thousand *yojanas*, or about four hundred thousand leagues. In the middle of this lake rises the famous mountain *Mahameru*. *Jambu-Dwipa* is divided into four equal parts, which are placed at the four cardinal points of *Mahameru*. India is in the part called Bharata-Kshetra.

These four divisions of *Jambu-Dwipa* are separated from each other by six lofty mountains, which are called Himavata, Maha-Himavata, Nishada, Nila, Arumani, Sikari, all running in the same direction from east to west, stretching across *Jambu-Dwipa* from one sea to the other.

These mountains are intersected by vast valleys, where the trees, shrubs, and fruits, which all grow wild, are of a beautiful pink colour. These delicious retreats are inhabited by good and virtuous people. Children of either sex living there arrive at maturity forty-eight hours after their birth. The inhabitants are not subject to pain or sickness. Always happy and contented, they live on the succulent vegetables and delicious fruits which nature produces for them without any cultivation. After death they go straight to the delights of *Swarga*.

A spring rises on the top of *Mahameru* which feeds fourteen large rivers, of which the principal are the Ganges and the Indus. All these rivers pursue a regular and even course, which never varies. Unlike the false Ganges and the false Indus of the Brahmins, the waters of which rise and fall, the Ganges and Indus of the Jains can never be forded, and their waters always maintain the same level.

The names of the fourteen rivers of the Jains are the Ganges, the Indus, the Rohita-Toya, the Rohita, the Hari-Toya, the Harikanta, the Sitta, the Sitoda, the Nari, the Narikanta, the Swarna-kula, the Rupaya-kula, the Rikta, and the Riktoda.

The sea which surrounds *Jambu-Dwipa* is two hundred thousand *yojanas*, or eight hundred thousand miles long.

Beyond this ocean there are three other continents, separated from each other by an immense sea. They closely resemble *Jambu-Dwipa*, and are also inhabited by human beings.

At the far end of the fourth continent, called *Puskara-varta-Dwipa*, is situated *Manushy-otraparvata*, a very lofty mountain which is the extreme limit of the habitable world. No living being has ever gone

beyond this mountain. Its base is washed by an immense ocean, in which are to be found an infinite number of islands which are inaccessible to the human race.

The Succession and Division of Time.

Time is divided into six periods, which succeed each other without interruption throughout eternity. At the termination of each period there is an entire revolution in nature, and the world is renewed. The first, called *Prathama-kala*, lasted for four *kotis* of *kotis*, or forty million millions of years; the second, *Dwitiya-kala*, thirty million millions; the third, *Tretiya-kala*, twenty million millions; the fourth, *Chaturtha-kala*, ten million millions, minus forty-two thousand years. The fifth period, called *Panchama-kala*, the period of inconstancy and change, is the age in which we are now living. It will last twenty-one thousand years. The present year (1824) of the Christian era is the year 2469 of the *Panchama-kala* of the Jains.

The comparatively recent date of the commencement of this period seems to me to be worthy of note. I am inclined to think that it is the date of the schism between the Brahmins and the Jains. Such a memorable event may well have been considered as giving birth to a new era. If this conjecture were confirmed it would be easier to fix the time when the principal myths of Hindu theology originated. There is no doubt that the new ideas introduced by the Brahmins into their religion occasioned the schism which exists to this day.

The sixth and last of these periods, the *Sashta-kala*, will also last twenty-one thousand years. The element of fire will then disappear from off the earth, and mankind will subsist entirely on reptiles, roots, and tasteless herbage, which will only grow sparsely here and there. There will then be no caste distinction or subordination, no public or private property, no form of government, no kings, no laws; men will lead the lives of perfect savages.

This period will terminate with a *jala-pralaya*, or flood, which will deluge the whole earth, except the mountain of silver, called Vidiparta. This flood will be caused by continuous rain for forty-seven days, which will result in a complete upsetting of the elements. A few people living near the silver mountain will take refuge in the caves which are hidden in its sides, and they will be saved amidst the universal destruction. After the catastrophe the elect will come forth from the mountain and will repeople the earth. Then the six periods will begin over again, and follow each other as they did before.

The Learning of the Jains.

The philosophy of the Jains is contained in four Vedas[1], twenty-four Puranas, and sixty-four Sastras. The Puranas take the names

[1] These are not called Vedas, but Agamas.—Ed.

of the twenty-four *Tirthankaras*[1], or saints. A Purana is assigned to each of them, and contains his history.

The names of the four Vedas are *Prathamani-yoga, Charanani-yoga, Karanani-yoga,* and *Draviani-yoga.* These four books were written by Adiswara, the most ancient and most celebrated of all the holy personages recognized by the Jains. He came down from *Swarga,* took a human form, and lived on earth for a *purva-koti*, or a hundred million million years. Not only did he compose the Vedas, but it was he who divided men into castes, gave them laws and a form of government, and laid down the lines of social order. In short, Adiswara is to the Jains what Brahma is to the Brahmins; one of them having most probably been modelled from the other.

The Sixty-three Saloka-purushas.

Besides Adiswara, who is the holiest and most perfect of all beings who have appeared on the earth in human form, the Jains recognize sixty-three others, whom they describe by the generic name of *Saloka-purushas,* and whom they also worship. Their history is contained in the *Prathamani-yoga.*

These venerable personages are subdivided into five classes: twenty-four *Tirthankaras,* twelve *Chakravartis,* nine *Vasu-devatas,* nine *Bala-vasu-devatas,* and nine *Bala-ramas.*

The twenty-four *Tirthankaras* are the holiest, and to them most honour is paid. Their position is the most sublime that a mortal can aspire to. They all lived in the most perfect state of *Nirvana.* They were subject to no infirmity or sickness; they felt no want, no weakness, and were not even subject to death. After having lived for a long time on earth they voluntarily quitted their bodies and went straight to *moksha,* where they were united with, and incorporated into, the Godhead.

All the *Tirthankaras* came down from *Swarga* and took human forms among the Kshatriya caste; but they were subsequently incorporated into that of the Brahmins by the ceremony of the *diksha*[2]. During their lives they were examples of all the virtues to other men, whom they exhorted by their precepts and their actions to conform strictly to the rules of conduct laid down by Adiswara, and to give themselves up entirely to meditation and penitence.

Some of them lived for millions of years; the last of them, however, only attained the age of eighty-four.

They were in existence during the period of *Chaturtha-kala.* Some

[1] *Tirthankaras* means those who have 'passed over' the gulf which separates human beings from the Godhead.—Ed.

[2] This word literally translated means 'initiation.'—Dubois.

... ARCHIVES ...

were married, but the greater number remained celibate, being professed *sannyasis*.

The twelve *Chakravartis*, or emperors, recognized by the Jains were contemporaries of the twenty-four *Tirthankaras*. They shared amongst them the temporal government of *Jambu-Dwipa*. They came straight from *Swarga*, and when on earth belonged to the noble caste of Kshatriyas. Some were initiated into the Brahmin caste by the ceremony of the *diksha*, completed their lives as *Sannyasi Nirvanis*, and after death obtained *moksha*, or supreme happiness. Others returned to *Swarga*. But three of them, having lived extremely wicked lives on earth, were condemned to the tortures of *Naraka*.

The twelve *Chakravartis* were often at war with one another, but they had more especially to fight against the nine *Vasu-devatas*, the nine *Bala-vasu-devatas*, and the nine *Bala-ramas*, who all governed different provinces in India[1].

The second Veda, or *Charanani-yoga*, contains the civil laws, also regulations relating to social status, caste, &c.

The third Veda, or *Karanani-yoga*, is a dissertation on the nature, order, and component parts of the *Jagat-triya*.

The fourth, or *Draviani-yoga*, contains the metaphysical theories of the Jains and several controversial subjects.

The State of Sannyasi Nirvani.

The most holy and sublime state to which man can possibly attain is that of *Sannyasi Nirvani*, which means 'naked penitent.' In embracing this state a man ceases to be a man; he begins to be a part of the Godhead. As soon as he has attained the highest degree of perfection in this state, he frees himself voluntarily, without any trouble or pain, from his own self, and obtains *moksha*, thus becoming incorporated for ever into the Divine Self. There is no real *Nirvani* existing in this *yuga*. Those who aspire to this state must pass through twelve successive degrees of meditation and corporal penance, each one more perfect than the last. These degrees are a kind of novitiate, and each of them has a special appellation. Having at last become a *Nirvani*, the penitent no longer belongs to this world. Terrestrial objects make no impres-

[1] Rama of the Brahmins is one of the nine *Bala ramas* of the Jains, and their Krishna is one of the *Vasu-devatas*. The Jains say that the Brahmins borrowed these two names to make up the *Avatars* of their god Vishnu. They assert generally that the Brahmins have stolen from them all the knowledge concerning which they so particularly pride themselves. —Dubois.

sion on his senses. He regards the good and evil, virtue and vice, to be found on this earth with equal indifference. He is freed from all passion. He scarcely feels the wants of nature. He is able to patiently endure hunger, thirst, and privations of all kinds. He can live without food of any sort for weeks and months together. When he is obliged to eat he partakes indifferently of the first animal or vegetable substance that comes to hand, however filthy or disgusting it may seem to ordinary people. He has neither fire nor sleeping place. He always lives in the open on the bare ground. Though absolutely naked from head to foot, he is insensible to cold and heat, wind and rain. Neither is he subject to sickness or any bodily infirmities. He feels the most profound contempt for all other men, no matter how exalted their rank may be, and he takes no account of their doings, good or bad. He speaks to no one, looks at no one, and is visited by no one. His feelings, his affections, and his thoughts are immutably fixed on the Godhead, of whom he considers himself as already a part. He remains absorbed in the contemplation of God's perfections, all earthly objects being to him as though they did not exist.

By a long course of penance and meditation the material part of the *Nirvani* gradually dissolves, like camphor when it is put in the fire. At last all that remains of the penitent is the semblance or shadow of a body, an immaterial phantom, so to say. Having arrived at this pitch of perfection, the *Nirvani* quits this lower world and proceeds to unite himself inseparably with the Godhead, where he enjoys eternal and ineffable happiness.

Jain Rules of Conduct.

In many respects Jain rules of conduct are similar to those followed by other Hindus, and particularly the Brahmins. The Jains recognize the same observances with regard to defilement and purity. They perform the same ablutions and recite the same prescribed *mantrams*. Most of their ceremonies relating to marriage, funerals, &c., are the same. In fact, all the rules of social etiquette and the general customs in use in ordinary life form part of their education.

The Jains differ from their compatriots in several particulars, of which the following are the most remarkable:—

Under no circumstances do they take any solid food beween sunset and sunrise. They always take their meals while the sun is above the horizon.

They have no *titis* or anniversaries in honour of the dead. As soon as one of them is dead and his funeral is over, they put him out of their memories and speak of him no more.

They never put ashes on their foreheads, as do most Hindus; they

are satisfied with making with sandalwood-paste the little round mark called *bottu*, or else a horizontal line. Some devotees put these marks on their forehead, neck, stomach, and both shoulders in the form of a cross, in honour of their five principal *Tirthankaras*.

The Jains are even stricter than the Brahmins in regard to their food. Not only do they abstain from all animal food, and from vegetables the stalks or roots of which grow in a bulbous shape, such as onions, mushrooms, &c., but they also refrain from eating many of the fruits which the Brahmins allow on their tables, such as the *katri-kai*, or brinjal, called *beringela* in Portuguese, the *pudalan-kai*, &c. Their motive is the fear of taking the life of some of the insects which are generally to be found in these vegetables and fruits. The principal, and indeed almost the only, articles of food used by the Jains are rice, milk, things made with milk, and peas of various kinds. They particularly dislike assafoetida, to which Brahmins are so partial[1], and honey is absolutely forbidden.

Whilst they are eating their food some person sits beside them and rings a bell, or strikes a gong. The object of this is to prevent the possibility of their hearing the impure conversation of their neighbours, or of the passers-by in the street. Both they and their food would be defiled if any impure words reached their ears while they were eating.

Their fear of destroying life is carried to such a length that the women, before smearing the floor with cow-dung, are in the habit of sweeping it very gently first, so as to remove, without hurting them, any insects that may be there. If they neglected this precaution they would run the risk of crushing one of these little creatures whilst rubbing the floor, which would be the source of the keenest regret to them.

Another of their customs, and one which, though for a very different motive, might be advantageously introduced into Europe, is to wipe most carefully anything that is to be used for food, so as to exclude as tenderly as possible any of the tiny living creatures which might be found in or on it.

The mouth of the vessel in which water for household purposes is drawn is always covered with a piece of linen, through which the water filters. This prevents the animalculae, which float or swim on the surface of the well, from getting into the vessel and being after-

[1] This resinous gum, the smell of which appears to us so abominable that we have called it *stercus diaboli*, strikes the smell and taste of the Hindus and almost all Asiatics very differently. They consider it to be possessed of an agreeable perfume and an exquisite flavour. The ancient Greeks and Romans shared their partiality for this substance; for it seems certain that the *σίλφιον* of the former and the *laser* of the latter were nothing more or less than assafoetida.—DUBOIS.

wards swallowed. When a Jain traveller wishes to quench his thirst at a tank or stream, he covers his mouth with a cloth, stoops down, and thus drinks by suction. This cleanly custom is highly to be recommended everywhere, apart from the superstition which prompts the Jains to practise it.

The Jains form a perfectly distinct class. Brahmins never attend any of their religious or civil ceremonies, while they, on their part, never attend those of the Brahmins. They have their own temples, and the priestly office is filled by men professing the same tenets as themselves.

Amongst these temples there are some which are richly endowed and very famous. The Jains make pilgrimages to them, sometimes from great distances. There is a very remarkable one in Mysore, at Sravana Belgola, a village near Seringapatam. It is between three mountains, on one of which is an enormous statue, about seventy feet high, sculptured out of one solid piece of rock. It must have been a tremendous piece of work; for to execute it, it was necessary to level the ground from the top of the mountain to below the base of the statue, and there form a sort of terrace, leaving in the centre this mass of rock which was to be carved into the shape of the idol. It is a very fine piece of Hindu sculpture. Many Europeans who have seen it have greatly admired the correctness of its proportions. It represents a celebrated *Nirvani* called Gumatta, a son of Adiswara. The figure is absolutely nude, as are most of the idols to which the Jains offer adoration, and which are always likenesses of ancient penitents belonging to this sect. In those days it would have shocked them to represent these penitents as wearing garments, since they made it a point of duty to go absolutely naked. Childless women may often be seen praying to these indecent idols, in order that they may become mothers.

This temple of Belgola, being only a day's journey from Seringapatam, has been frequently visited by Europeans. It was a great source of grief to the devotees of the sect to see this *punyasthala* (holy place) defiled by a crowd of unbelieving visitors. And what was still worse, these inquisitive foreigners were often accompanied by their dogs and their Pariah servants. In one resting-place they would cook a stew, in another they would roast a piece of beef under the very nose, as it were, of the idol, whose sense of smell, the Jains thought, was infinitely disgusted by the smoke of this abominable style of cooking. At last the *guru* attached to the temple, shocked at all this desecration, fled from the unhallowed spot, and retired to some solitary place on the Malabar coast. After three years of this voluntary exile, he returned to his former abode on the assurance that Europeans had ceased to visit the place, and that the temple had been thoroughly purified. Now, I ask you whether it is not the

duty of any well-conducted man, even if he does not respect them, at least not to openly outrage the prejudices, feelings, and customs of any people amongst whom he may happen to be thrown, no matter how peculiar or ridiculous they may appear to him. What pleasure could be derived, or what good could be gained, by exciting the anger and contempt of those from whom one has nothing to fear, and who cannot retaliate?

An invalid European officer, who was going to the Malabar coast for change of air, on passing near Belgola, was seized with the idea of spending a night in the temple, which he did, in spite of much opposition on the part of the inhabitants. Two days afterwards the officer died on the road, to the great delight of all the natives, who, of course, attributed his death to a miracle, and looked upon it as a direct retribution from their outraged deity. This just and condign punishment, said they, would inspire with wholesome fear others who might be tempted to try a similar experiment.

The idols of the Jains differ in many respects from those of the Brahmins. Almost all have curly hair like Negroes. They wear neither ear-rings, necklaces, bracelets, nor bangles on their ankles, whilst the Brahmins, on the other hand, overload the objects of their devotion with such ornaments.

APPENDIX II

The *Eka-dasi*, or Eleventh Day of the Moon.

THE eleventh day of the moon is religiously observed, not only by Brahmins, but by all those castes which have the right to wear the triple cord. They keep a strict fast on this day, abstain entirely from rice, do no servile work, and give themselves up wholly to devotional exercises. The following is what the *Vishnu-purana* says on the subject:—

The *Eka-dasi* is a day specially set apart for the worship of Vishnu; those who offer him *puja* on this day ensure for themselves immortality. Even before the creation of the world the 'Man of Sin' was created by Vishnu to punish mankind [1]. He is of enormous stature, with a terrific countenance and a body absolutely black; his eyes are wild and glaring with rage; he is the executioner of mankind [1]. Krishna, having seen this 'Man of Sin,' became thoughtful and

[1] See the description in the chapter on the *Sandhya*.

pensive. Touched by the woes with which mankind was overwhelmed, Krishna resolved to remedy the evil. With this end in view he mounted the bird Garuda, son of Binota, and went in search of Yama, the King of Hell. The Child of the Sun, delighted at this visit of Narayana, who was master and *guru* of the world, hastened to offer him *puja*, and placed him on a massive throne of gold. No sooner had Krishna seated himself thereon than he heard the most piteous and plaintive cries. Moved with compassion, he asked the King of *Naraka* whence these lamentations proceeded, and what caused them.

'The lamentations that you hear, O Lord of the World,' replied Yama, 'are the tears and groans of the unfortunate beings who, having spent their whole lives in sin, are now suffering the tortures of Hell, where they are treated according to their deserts.'

'Then,' said Krishna, 'let us go to this place of torment, that I may see for myself what these sinners are enduring.'

And he did see, and his heart was softened.

'What!' cried he, overcome with grief, 'is it possible that men, who are creatures and children of mine, are enduring such cruel agony! Shall I be a witness of their sufferings and do nothing to help them? Cannot I give them some means of avoiding them in the future?'

Thereupon he considered how he might bring the reign of the 'Man of Sin' to an end, he being the sole cause of all mankind's misfortune. Accordingly, to preserve henceforth the human race from the torments of *Naraka* he transformed himself into the *Eka-dasi*, or eleventh day of the moon. This is, therefore, the blessed day that Vishnu has selected in his mercy to redeem and save mankind. It is the happy day that procures the pardon of one's sins; it is the day of days, since one must look upon it as being Krishna himself.

The inhabitants of Hell, full of gratitude for the kindness that Vishnu had showed towards them, worshipped him and chanted his praises loudly. Thereupon Vishnu, being much pleased by their prayers and praises, wished to give them an immediate proof of his goodness. Turning to the 'Man of Sin,' he addressed him in the following words:—

'Begone, wretched being, begone! Thy reign is over. Till now thou hast been the tormentor of mankind; I command thee to let them live in peace for the future. They are my children, and I desire them to be happy. I wish, nevertheless, to assign to thee a place where thou mayest live, but thy place shall be unique; it shall be here. The *Eka-dasi*, or eleventh day of the moon, is myself in another form. It is the day that I have chosen, in my mercy, to save men and deliver them from their sins. Nevertheless, in order that they

may be worthy of so great a favour, I expressly forbid them to eat rice on this day. I ordain that thou shalt dwell in this rice. This is the abode that I assign to thee. Whoever shall have the temerity to eat this food, thus defiled by thy presence, will incorporate thee with himself, and will forfeit all hope of pardon.'

Thus spake Vishnu; and the following is the sentence of life and death which he pronounced, and which cannot be too strongly impressed on the attention of mankind:—

'I repeat, therefore, again, because I cannot say it too often: Do not eat rice on that day; whoever you are, be your position and condition what they may, do not eat rice. Once more I say, do not eat rice.'

To fast on this holy day and to offer *puja* to Vishnu is to ensure the forgiveness of sins and the gratification of all one's wishes. Moreover these further observances must be followed. On the tenth day the *sandhya* must be performed, and only one meal must be eaten, and that without salt or any kind of peas or vegetables. It must only be seasoned with a small quantity of melted butter, and it must be eaten quickly. In the evening one must visit a temple dedicated to Vishnu, and, holding some *darbha* grass in one's hands, must meditate for some time on the greatness of the deity, addressing to him the following prayer:—

'Behold me in thy presence, great god! I prostrate myself at thy feet. Hold out a helping hand to me and remove the obstacles which I encounter at each step. My feeble will is often led astray by the passions that influence me. Thou alone canst give it strength to resist such weaknesses, and keep it straight in the path of virtue.'

This prayer being ended, some *darbha* grass must be offered to Narayana, and the worshipper must prostrate himself before him with his face to the ground.

Making a bed of this same grass at the feet of Vishnu, he must pass the night upon it. On rising in the morning he must wash his mouth out twelve times and perform the usual ablutions. During the day he must fulfil his ordinary religious duties, the chief of which is the sacrifice to Vishnu. He must fast for the whole of the day, eating and drinking nothing. The night of the eleventh day must also be spent in a temple dedicated to Vishnu. The whole family—father, mother, wife, brothers, and children—must remain together in the presence of Vishnu, and remain awake.

The wife who performs this act of devotion along with her husband will, on her reincarnation, have a husband who will make her very happy, and by whom she will have a numerous family. After her death she will be conveyed to *Vaikuntha*, and be reunited to her first husband.

Whoever during this night shall occupy himself in drawing the

emblems of the *chakra* and *sankha*, which Vishnu carries in his hand, will obtain the remission of his sins committed in former generations. Whoever shall make a model of these two weapons with dough of rice flour, in several colours, shall receive a much greater reward, for his sons and his grandsons shall enjoy prosperity on earth, and occupy after their death a high place in *Vaikuntha*.

If any one places little flags of various colours in Vishnu's temple he will eventually be born again king of a fine country. And if any one allows the cloths and flags that have been offered to Vishnu to flutter freely in the wind, he will receive pardon for all his sins, however heinous they may have been. Any one who places an umbrella over Vishnu's head will be reborn rich and powerful, and will himself have the right to use one.

To employ oneself during this same night in making a little house of flowers for Vishnu is as meritorious a work as if one had sacrificed a horse a hundred times over. And if any one should make this house in cloth, he will himself have a house of bricks in *Vaikuntha*.

On the *salagrama* stone or on the image of Vishnu must then be poured some *pancha-amrita*, that is to say milk, melted butter, curds, honey, and sugar mixed together. The image must then be adorned with rich stuffs and precious jewels, and a fan must be placed before it. Having performed the *sam-kalpa*, and purified by the *santi-yoga*[1] the five elements of which man is composed, the worshippers must fix their thoughts on Vishnu, and, holding flowers in their hands, must meditate for some time on the perfections of the deity. They must picture him to themselves in their mind's eye as seated on a golden throne with his daughter by his side, casting around the effulgent light that encircles him, having sometimes two and sometimes four arms. To this Supreme Lord of the Universe must their homage be addressed.

This act of meditation ended, the worshippers must offer him *puja*, beginning with the *Swagata*; that is to say, they must ask the god whether he is in good health, and has accomplished his journey safely.

They will then present to him water to wash his feet, and to refresh him after the fatigues of his journey. They must say: 'God of Gods, receive this water to wash your feet; it is pure and sweet, and will refresh you, and it will remove the dust which has covered you on your way.'

They will then give him water for rinsing out his mouth, and more water and flowers to put on his head; some milk, honey, and sugar, mixed together, to quench his thirst; and various kinds of food to satisfy his appetite. It is thus, at intervals of three hours, that they

[1] See the description in the chapter on the *Sandhya*.

must offer *puja* to Vishnu. Everything that is offered to him must be the very best that can be procured.

I have already said that they must pass the night without closing an eye for a moment; they must spend it in dancing and singing to the sound of musical instruments. It is sufficient to repeat Vishnu's names, or even to hear them repeated, to obtain the remission of all one's sins and the accomplishment of all one's desires. It is considered a meritorious action even to go and look at persons who are spending the night in the performance of these pious exercises.

Great care must be taken on this holy day not to speak to any one who is not a true worshipper of Vishnu. To address even one word to unbelievers would cause Vishnu's worshippers to lose all the benefit of their devotion.

He who on this day hears the sound of musical instruments played in honour of Vishnu and is not enchanted, is like a dog when it hears the *vina*. The pious man should delight in listening to a symphony which is in itself capable of remitting sins, because it adds to the glory of the Lord of the World. He should join in the saintly throng of worshippers, when they with one accord hasten to show their devotion and their zeal by their dances, songs, and hymns in honour of the great deity.

He who objects to such acts of worship is the greatest of sinners. He who, while not actually disapproving, refrains from taking part in them, and occupies himself instead with other matters, will be punished for his indifference by being reborn as a cock in another life. He will be reborn dumb if he does not contribute as much as ever he can towards the pomp and ceremony of the *Eka-dasi*.

Every kind of musical instrument must be played on that night, and in fact everything that is possible must be done to contribute to Vishnu's pleasure. The worshippers must walk round the image of the god several times in procession; they must prostrate themselves before it, and from time to time they must pour milk upon its head. Each worshipper, at the conclusion of the ceremony, must give a present to the Brahmins in proportion to his means.

Ordinary food may be taken on the twelfth day in the afternoon, but not before, on pain of forfeiting for a hundred generations all the blessings which should flow from these ceremonies[1].

Those who faithfully observe the fast of the *Eka-dasi* in the manner described will make sure of salvation. If any one has killed a Brahmin or a cow, taken away the wife or property of another, committed fornication with the wife of his *guru*, drunk intoxicating liquors, caused abortion in a pregnant woman; all these and other similar

[1] This is incorrect. Those who fast on the eleventh day break their fast before sunrise on the twelfth day.—Ed.

sins, no matter how numerous or heinous they may be, will be entirely absolved by the fast of the *Eka-dasi*, and by sacrifices offered to Vishnu on that day.

. . . .

Such, in brief, is what Markandeya teaches us.

Before leaving this subject I ought to mention that the precepts contained in these instructions are not strictly kept, except by a very small number of devotees. The *Eka-dasi*, it is true, is kept as a holy day by Brahmins, and by all persons who have the right to wear the triple cord, and even by a few Sudras of good position, but they content themselves with spending the day in performing a few religious rites and in amusements. Nevertheless they all abstain from eating rice. Towards evening, however, they have a meal composed of cakes and fruit, which greatly modifies and simplifies the severity and length of the fast prescribed by the *Vishnu-purana*.

APPENDIX III

Siva-Ratri, or Siva's Night.

THE feast of *Siva-Ratri* is celebrated with great ceremony, especially by the Sivaites. This is what we read in the *Skanda-purana* on the subject:—

There is in *Jambu-Dwipa* a large town known by the name of Varanasi, where dwelt a man belonging to the *boya* or huntsman caste, who was short of stature, very dark in complexion, and of a most violent and passionate temper. One day when out hunting in the woods, as was his wont, he killed such an enormous quantity of birds of all kinds that he was hardly able to carry them, and was obliged to sit down and rest at almost every step. Dusk was coming on while he was still in the middle of a thick forest, and anxious not to lose the spoil of his day's hunting or to become a prey to the wild beasts that infested the place, he went up to a *vepu*[1] or margosa-tree, hung his game upon one of the branches, and climbed up into the tree, intending to spend the night there. Now that night happened to be the night of the new moon of the month of *Phalguna* (March), a time of year when dew falls heavily and the nights are chilly. The hunter, benumbed with cold, tormented by hunger (for he had eaten nothing during the day), and half dead with terror, passed a very miserable night. At the foot of the tree was a *lingam*, and this circumstance

[1] It should be the *bilva*, not the *vepu*.—ED.

proved to be the salvation of the hunter. The discomforts that he was enduring obliged him to change his position frequently, and the shaking of the branches of the *vepu*[1] caused some drops of dew, together with some leaves, flowers, and fruit, to fall on the *lingam*. This fortunate accident was sufficient to win Siva's favour and to obtain for the hunter absolution for all his sins. For Siva, to whose worship this night was specially consecrated, was much gratified at the offering thus made to his adored symbol; and he ordained that he who had made it, involuntary though his offering was, should be rewarded, and that his long fast and attendant anxieties should be reckoned in his favour. The hunter regained his house the following morning, and died a few days afterwards. Yama, King of Hell, on hearing of his death, immediately sent his emissaries to secure him and bring him away. But Siva, on hearing of this, also sent his own emissaries to oppose those of Yama and to claim the dead man. Yama's messengers declined to yield, and a violent quarrel ensued between them and the emissaries of Siva. From insults they quickly proceeded to violence. Siva's party, being the stronger, put the agents of *Naraka* to flight, after severely punishing them. The latter, in shame and bitterness, went and told their story to their master, and to excite his wrath showed him the wounds that they had received in the combat. Yama, beside himself with indignation, went at once to *Kailasa* to make complaint to Siva in person. At the gate of the deity's palace he found Nandi, the prime minister, to whom he explained the object of his visit, at the same time expressing his surprise that Siva should thus declare himself the protector of a common *boya*, a hardened sinner, whose trade necessitated the slaughter of many living creatures.

'King of Hell,' replied Nandi, 'it is true that this man has been a great sinner and that he has not scrupled to shed blood; but before he died he, fortunately for himself, fasted, watched, and offered a sacrifice to the *lingam* during the night consecrated to Siva. This meritorious action has obtained for him the remission of all his sins, the protection of Siva, and an honourable place in *Kailasa*.'

When Yama heard Nandi's words, he became thoughtful, and withdrew without uttering another word.

This is the origin of the feast of *Siva-Ratri*, or Night of Siva. In commemoration of the fortunate *boya* the devotees of Siva spend the night and the preceding day in fasting and without sleep, entirely absorbed in worshipping the god, in offering him sacrifices, and presenting him with the bitter leaves of the *vepu*[1] or margosa-tree as *neiveddya*, which they afterwards eat.

[1] It should be the *bilva*, not the *vepu*.—Ed.

APPENDIX IV

Rules of Conduct for Women during their Periodical Uncleanness.

When a woman is in a state of periodical uncleanness, she is isolated in some place apart, and may have no communication with any one during the three days that her defilement is supposed to last. The first day she must look upon herself as a Pariah. The second day she must consider herself as unclean as if she had killed a Brahmin. The third day she is supposed to be in an intermediate state between the two preceding ones. The fourth day she purifies herself by ablutions, observing all the ceremonies required on these occasions. Until then she must neither bathe nor wash any part of her body, nor shed tears. She must be very careful not to kill any insect, or any other living creature. She must not ride on a horse, an elephant, or a bullock, nor travel in a palanquin, a dooly, or a carriage. She must not anoint her head with oil, or play at dice and other games, or use sandalwood, musk, or perfumes of any kind. She must not lie on a bed or sleep during the day. She must not brush her teeth or rinse out her mouth. The mere wish to cohabit with her husband would be a serious sin. She must not think of the gods or of the sun, or of the sacrifices and worship due to them. She is forbidden to salute persons of high rank. If several women in this unclean state should find themselves together in one place, they must not speak to or touch each other. A woman in this condition must not go near her children, touch them, or play with them. After living thus in retirement for three days, on the fourth she must take off the garments that she has been wearing, and these must be immediately given to the washerman. She must then put on a clean cloth and another over it, and go to the river to purify herself by bathing. On her way there she must walk with her head bent, and must take the greatest care to glance at nobody, for her looks would defile any person on whom they rested. When she has reached the river she must first enter the water and fill the copper vessel, or *chembu*, which she has brought with her from the house. Then, returning to the bank, she must thoroughly cleanse her teeth, rinse out her mouth twelve times, and wash her hands and feet. She must then enter the water and plunge twelve times into it, immersing the whole of her body. She must take the greatest care while doing this not to look at any living soul, and to this end each time her head rises above the water she must turn her eyes towards the sun. On coming out of the water she must take a little fresh cow-dung, some *tulasi*, and some earth. These she must mix together in a little water,

until they make a thin paste, and with this she must thoroughly rub her hands and feet and then her whole body. After this she must re-enter the water, and completely immerse herself twenty-four times. When she again leaves the water she must rub herself over with saffron, and again dip three times in the water. Then mixing saffron in a little water, she must drink some and pour the rest on her head, after which she must put on a pure cloth freshly washed and the little bodice called *ravikai*. She may then paint the little round red mark on her forehead called *kunkuma* and return home. On entering the house she must take special care that her eyes do not rest on her children, for they would thereby be exposed to the greatest danger. She must immediately send for a Brahmin *purohita* so that he may complete her purification. On his arrival this venerable person first plaits together thirty-two stalks of *darbha* grass, to make the ring called *pavitram*, which he dips in consecrated water that he has brought with him. The woman then takes another bath, drinks a little of the consecrated water, places the *pavitram* on the ring finger of the right hand, and drinks some *pancha-gavia* or some cow's milk. After these ceremonies her purification is complete.

APPENDIX V

Remarks on the Origin of the Famous Temple of Jagannath.

THE Province of Orissa, in which the temple of Jagannath is situated, is called in Hindu books Utkala-desa. Indra-mena, say these books, reigned over the country. Inflamed with desire to save his soul, the prince saw with dismay that he had as yet done nothing which would ensure his happiness after death. This thought troubled him exceedingly, and he confided his anxiety to Brahma with the Four Faces, who was his favourite divinity. Brahma, being greatly touched by the sincere regrets and fervent piety of the prince, addressed him one day in the following consolatory terms:—

'Cease, great king, from troubling thyself about thy future state; I will point out to thee a way of assuring thy salvation. On the sea-coast is a country called Utkala-desa, and therein rises the mountain sometimes called Nila and sometimes Purushóttama, which is a *yojana* or three leagues in length. It is called by the latter name after the god who formerly took up his abode there. This mountain is a holy place, and the sight of it has the virtue of taking away sins.

In former *yugas* there was a temple of solid gold upon it, dedicated to Vishnu. This temple is still in existence, but has been buried in the sand cast up by the sea, which renders it invisible at the present time. Restore this temple, cause its ancient glory to be revived, renew the sacrifices which were formerly offered there, and thou shalt thus ensure thyself a place of felicity after death.'

The king, Indra-mena, delighted with what he had heard, asked Brahma who was the founder of this magnificent temple, and where the exact spot was on which it had been built. Brahma responded:—

'It was thy ancestors, great king, who erected it in the preceding *yuga*, and who by this means procured for mankind the ineffable happiness of seeing the Supreme Being on this earth. Go, then, and reclaim this venerable spot from oblivion; cause the deity to descend there anew, and thou shalt procure a similar happiness for the human race.'

'But how,' again asked the prince, 'can I discover a temple which is completely buried in the sand, unless you yourself help me to find it?'

Thereupon Brahma gave him a few directions, and added that he would find, not far from the mountain of Nila, a tank wherein lived a turtle as old as the world, who would give him more definite particulars.

Indra-mena thanked Brahma and at once set forth to find the tank. Hardly had he arrived on its banks when a turtle of enormous size approached him, and asked who he was and what he wanted in that desert place.

'I am,' replied the prince, 'by birth a Kshatriya and sovereign of a great kingdom, but the enormity of my sins and the remorse that I feel oppress me and make me the most miserable of men. Brahma with the Four Faces has given me some vague information respecting a holy place near the mountain of Nila, assuring me that I shall be able to obtain from you all the necessary directions to guide me in my search.'

'I am delighted, O prince,' replied the turtle, 'to have an opportunity of contributing to your happiness. Unfortunately, however, I am unable to satisfy you upon all the points about which you seek information, for my great age has caused a partial loss of memory; yet the indications that I can give may, perhaps, be useful to you. It is quite true that in former days there existed a temple near the mountain of Nila, which was famous for its wealth. The God with Four Arms, the God of Gods, the Great Vishnu, had taken up his abode there. All the other gods resorted to it regularly to do him honour, and it was also a spot which they greatly affected for indulging in their amours. But for a long time past the sand thrown up by the

sea has covered this sacred pile, and the god, finding that he no longer received the accustomed marks of respect, left it and returned to *Vaikuntha*. All that I know is that this edifice is buried a *yojana* (three leagues) deep in this sandy soil. I have lost all trace of the site that it formerly occupied. Nevertheless there is another and a certain way by which you can discover it. Go to the tank called Markandeya; on its banks you will find a crow which has been gifted with immortality, and which can recall everything that happened in the most distant times. Go and inquire of it and you will obtain all the information you want.'

The king hastened to the tank Markandeya and there found the crow, which from its extreme age had become quite white. Prostrating himself before it, he joined his hands in a supplicating manner and said:—

'O crow, who enjoyest the gift of immortality! you see before you a king who is a prey to the deepest despair; and only you can comfort him!'

'What,' said the crow, 'is the cause of your sorrow? What can I do for you?'

'I will tell you,' replied Indra-mena; 'but do not hide from me, I implore you, anything that I want to know. Tell me first of all, who was the first king who ever reigned over this country, and what he did that was remarkable?'

The crow, well versed in ancient history, had no difficulty in satisfying the monarch, and answered in the following terms:—

'The first king of this country was called Chaturanana. He had a son called Visva-Bahu, who in turn had a son called Indra-mena, a prince who, having always shown great devotion to Brahma with the Four Faces, was thought worthy after death to be admitted to the presence of the deity. The reign of Chaturanana was a period of great happiness. He dealt with his subjects as a tender father deals with his children. Amongst the many praiseworthy acts which made his reign remarkable was one by which his name will be for ever remembered. It was he who had the honour and glory of inducing the God of Gods to come down to earth from *Vaikuntha*. He built for him a dwelling-place at the foot of the mountain of Nila, a magnificent temple, the walls of which were of massive gold, while the interior was embellished with most precious stones. Time, that universal destroyer, has respected this edifice, and it is still in existence perfectly uninjured. But for a long time past it has been swallowed up by the sands of the sea. It is true that the god who inhabited the sacred spot has ceased to dwell there; nevertheless, he could not entirely forsake a mountain that had once been consecrated by his presence, and he has taken up his abode there in the shape of a *vepu* or margosa-tree. One day the famous penitent Markandeya,

who for many centuries did penance on this mountain, perceiving that this tree gave no shade, was roused to indignation, and breathing upon it he partially reduced it to ashes. This tree, however, was Vishnu, the Supreme Being, and consequently immortal. The penitent could not, therefore, entirely destroy it, and the trunk still remains. The only thing that I do not know is the exact spot where this tree grew.'

Here Indra-mena interrupted the crow, and asked if it could recognize the spot where the temple stood. The crow replied in the affirmative. So they both set out together to find the site. At the place where they stopped the crow set to work to dig into the sand with his beak to the depth of a *yojana*, and at last succeeded in disclosing in its entirety the magnificent temple which had formerly been the abode of Narayana, the God of Gods. Having shown it to the king, the crow covered it up again as before.

The king, convinced of the truth of all that the crow had told him, and enraptured at having found that for which he had been seeking so earnestly, questioned his guide as to what steps he should take to restore to its former state of splendour and fame a place which had been so venerated.

'What you now ask of me,' the crow replied, 'is beyond my province. Go and find Brahma with the Four Faces, and he will tell you how to accomplish your desire.'

Indra-mena followed this advice. He again sought Brahma, and having offered him worship several times, he said:—

'I have now seen with my own eyes near the mountain Nila that superb temple which was formerly the abode of the great Vishnu, and am come to consult you, great god, on the course that I should pursue in order to rekindle in the heart of the people the holy fervour which this sacred place inspired in former times. If I build a town, what name shall I give to it? Vishnu, I know, will return and honour the place with his presence under the form of the trunk of a tree, but how will he come, and what sacrifices and offerings must be made to him? Deign to enlighten me, great god, and help me in this difficulty.'

'To accomplish the praiseworthy object that is in thy mind,' said Brahma, 'thou must erect a new temple on the very spot where the old one is now buried. Thou shalt give it the name of Sridekul. It is not necessary to make it as costly as the former one, because the present inhabitants of the country, being reduced to great poverty, would remove it piecemeal, and thy labour would be lost. It need only be built of stone. In order to provide the necessary accommodation for the crowd of devotees who will visit it, thou must build near the temple a town which will receive the name of Purushottama. The moment the work is finished the trunk of a tree, that is to say

Krishna himself, will appear on the sea-shore. This thou must remove with much pomp and ceremony into the new temple. The carpenter Visvakarma will come and work at it, and will fashion it into the face and form of the god. Thou shalt place beside this god his sister Subadra and his brother Balarama. Thou must offer sacrifices to the god day and night, but especially in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. This will be a sure and certain means of securing for thyself, and for all those who follow thy example, a place in *Vaikuntha*, the Abode of Bliss. As Vishnu will not be able to consume the enormous quantity of food that will be offered to him as *neiveddya* by the multitude of his devotees, men may therein find a means of purifying themselves and obtaining the remission of their sins by eating the remnants. Happy is he who shall secure for himself the smallest particle, for he will certainly go to *Vaikuntha* after death. To give thee some idea of the inestimable value of the remnants of Krishna's food, let me tell thee that if by accident or inadvertence some fragments should fall to the ground, the very gods themselves would strive for them, even if the dogs had already devoured a portion. In short, if a Pariah were to take some rice destined for Krishna from the mouth of a dog and put it into that of a Brahmin, this rice would be so pure, and would possess so many virtues, that it would immediately purify that Brahmin. The goddess Lakshmi cooks and prepares the food destined for Krishna, and the goddess Annapurni waits upon him. A portion of the tree *kalpa* will come down from *Swarga* and take root in the centre of thy new city. Thou knowest that this tree is immortal, and that thou hast only to ask it for what thou desirest to be sure of obtaining it. The mere sight of the temple that thou art about to erect will be sufficient to procure inestimable blessings. Even to be beaten with sticks there by the priests who serve the temple will be reckoned of peculiar merit. Indra, and the gods who follow in his train, will come and live in thy new city, and will be company for the god Krishna. The side of the city which faces the sea will be much more sacred than the other parts. Those who live on this side of it will daily increase in virtue. The sand which the sea deposits there thou shalt call *kanaka*, or gold dust. Any one who shall die on this sand will assuredly go to *Vaikuntha*. This, prince, is my answer to thy requests. Go at once and execute all my commands. In the meantime Vishnu, under the guise of the tree which is to form the trunk of which I have spoken, will grow and become fitted for the purpose for which it is destined.'

Indra-mena, having offered thanks to Brahma, set about to obey him. The temple and the new city were built with the utmost celerity. Yet when the work was completed the god did not appear. This delay began to cause the prince some uneasiness, when one day,

having risen very early, he perceived on the sea-shore the trunk of the tree for which he was watching so impatiently. He prostrated himself several times before it with his face to the ground, and in the fullness of his joy cried: 'O happiest day of my life! I now have certain proofs that I was born under a lucky star, and that my sacrifices have been pleasing to the gods. Nothing can equal the happiness that I derive from this; for with my own eyes I see the Supreme Being, him whom the most favoured and the most virtuous among men are not permitted to see.'

Having thus rendered to the trunk of the tree these preliminary acts of worship, the king put himself at the head of a hundred thousand men, who marched to the new deity and placed him on their shoulders. He was thus removed to the temple with the greatest pomp.

The famous carpenter, Visvakarma, speedily arrived and undertook to carve the face and figure of the god Krishna on the tree which had just been deposited in the temple. He promised to finish the work in one night; but only on condition that no one looked on while he performed his task. A single inquisitive glance, he said, would be sufficient to make him abandon it, never to return.

This was agreed upon, and Visvakarma at once set to work. As he made no noise about it, the king, who was in a constant state of anxiety, imagined that he had run away and was not going to fulfil his promise; so to make sure, he crept softly up to the temple and peeped through the cracks in the door. To his great delight he saw the carpenter quietly at work, so he retired at once. But Visvakarma had caught sight of him; and, angered at this breach of confidence, he left the work as it was, roughly hewn out, with only an indistinct indication of a human form. And so the trunk of the tree remained much as it was in its original state, and just as it may be seen at the present day.

Indra-mena was vexed at this untoward occurrence, but in spite of it the tree-trunk became his god, and he gave it his daughter in marriage; the wedding being celebrated with the utmost magnificence.

This, then, is the history of the foundation of the city of Purushottama, now called Jagannath, and of the tree-trunk which is worshipped under the name of Jagannatha, or Lord of the Universe.

APPENDIX VI

Trial by Ordeal.—Its Different Forms.

When the evidence against a man accused of either a civil or criminal offence is not sufficiently strong to convict him, the Hindus often have recourse to trial by ordeal, this method of settling doubtful cases being a regular part of their judicial system. The principal ordeals are those by scales and weights, by fire, by water, and by poison[1]. The following are the rules to be observed. The months of *Cheitra*, *Vaisaka*, and *Margasira* (April, May, and December) are the most favourable for ordeals, though that of the scales can take place at any time when there is not too much wind. The ordeal by fire should be practised during the rainy season, that by water in the hot weather and in autumn, that by poison in winter and in foggy weather. If careful attention is not paid to these points grave errors are liable to occur. An ordeal which took place at an unfavourable moment would be of no assistance in ascertaining the truth. The accused who is to be tried by ordeal prepares himself by fasting and ablutions. He then goes to a Brahmin *purohita*, explains the circumstances of the case, and receives his advice and instruction. After this he offers a sacrifice to all the Brahmins present, asks for their *asirvadam* (blessing), and then speaks as follows :—'Say that this day shall be a fortunate one for me, a day of virtue, a day on which it will be recognized that I am innocent of the crime of which I am accused, a day on which I shall receive many blessings.'

To this the Brahmins reply three times :—

'May this day be a fortunate one for thee, a day of virtue, a day on which thy innocence will be proved, a day on which thou shalt receive many blessings.'

This preliminary ceremony, which is called the *sasti-vassa*, being ended, they offer *homam* in honour of the nine planets. The scales are then brought in. Over them is a little white flag, and a stake is driven into the ground to support them. The *purohita* presiding over the ceremony takes a vessel containing water, rice, and flowers, and turning towards the east, says :—

[1] There are ten forms of trial by ordeal :—*Tula*, 'the balance'; *Agni*, 'fire'; *Jala*, 'water'; *Visha*, 'poison'; *Kosa*, 'drinking water in which an idol has been washed'; *Tandula*, 'ejecting chewed rice grains'; *Tapta masha*, 'taking a *masha* weight of gold out of heated oil'; *Phala*, 'holding a hot ploughshare'; *Dharma dharma*, 'drawing concealed images of Virtue and Vice out of a vessel filled with earth'; *Tulasi*, 'holding the leaves of holy basil.' This holy basil is sacred to Vishnu.—Ed.

'Glory to the three worlds[1]!

'Goddess of Virtue, approach this place, come near, accompanied by the eight divine guardians of the eight corners of the world, and by the gods of wealth and of winds.'

He offers *puja* to the goddess of Virtue; then turning successively to the eight principal points of the globe, he says:—

To the east, 'Glory to Indra!' (the king of the gods).

To the south, 'Glory to Yama!' (the Hindu Pluto).

To the west, 'Glory to Varuna!' (the Hindu Neptune).

To the north, 'Glory to Kubera!' (the Hindu Plutus).

To the south-east, 'Glory to Agni!' (fire).

To the south-west, 'Glory to Nairuta!' (the Chief of the Devils).

To the north-west, 'Glory to Vayu!' (the wind).

To the north-east, 'Glory to Isana!' (the Destroyer).

He then offers *puja* to these eight deities. He also offers it to the eight gods of wealth, to the twelve suns[2], to the twelve Rudras, to the sixteen mothers, to Ganesha, and finally to the eight winds[3]. He offers to Virtue the lesser *puja*, that is to say, sandalwood, flowers, incense, a lamp, and *neiveddya*.

Then follows the *homam*. The fire having been consecrated and purified by the *purohita* according to Vedic rites, and the *gayatri mantram* having been recited, they throw into the fire a hundred and eight, or twenty-eight, or at least eight pieces of the *villi* tree, dipped in a mixture of butter and rice. At this juncture presents must be given to the Brahmins.

Then the accused, who must be fasting and be wearing very damp clothes, is placed on that side of the scale which is towards the west. They then put bricks and *darbha* grass on the other side until a perfectly just balance has been obtained. The accused then leaves his scale and is sent to perform his ablutions without taking off his garments. During this interval the *purohita* writes in two lines of equal length, and each containing an equal number of letters, the *mantram* of which the following is a translation:—

'Sun, moon, wind, fire, *Swarga*, earth, water, virtue, Yama, day, night, dusk, and dawn, you know this man's deeds, and whether the accusation is true or false.'

He then specifies below the offence which the accused is supposed to have committed. This writing must not be in black ink; ink of some different colour must be used.

[1] The three worlds, called the *tri-loka* when spoken of collectively, are *Swarga*, *Bhu-loka*, and *Patala*—heaven, earth, and hell.—Dubois.

[2] Mitra is one of the most common names for the sun. It is also the Persian name for this luminary, which peculiarity strikes me as noteworthy.—Dubois.

[3] Amongst these winds there is one called *anima*, which, I think, is also worth noticing.—Dubois.

The *purohita* places the writing on the head of the accused, and addresses the scales in these words:—'Scales, you know everything that is in the hearts of men; you know their vices and their virtues. What escapes man's perspicacity is not hidden from you. Behold a person who is accused of a crime of which he declares himself to be innocent, and who desires to prove his innocence to the public. If he is not guilty, justice demands that you should pronounce in his favour.'

The duty of watching the movements of the scales must be left neither to a religious recluse, nor yet to a person of doubtful honesty. The former would be too likely to be influenced by compassion; the latter would not scruple to trifle with his conscience. A Brahmin of tried wisdom and virtue is therefore chosen to fill the office, and he in his turn makes this speech to the scales:—

'Scales, the gods have appointed you to dispense justice to mankind and to reveal the truth. Show it, therefore, on this occasion; and if the man you are about to try is really guilty, do not allow him to preserve his equilibrium, but make the weight of his sin turn the scale against him.'

The *purohita* then puts the accused again in the scales. He chants five times a stanza suitable to the occasion. If the scale on which the accused is standing forthwith drops, he is declared guilty; if the contrary is the case, he is declared innocent. If the scales remain equal, he is considered to be partially guilty; and if the rope breaks, he is reckoned altogether guilty.

The ceremony, as usual, terminates with a distribution of presents to the assembled Brahmins.

In the ordeal by fire they first of all draw eight circles on the ground, each sixteen fingers in diameter, leaving the same amount of space between each. Fire is the presiding genius of the first circle. Varuna, the wind, Yama, Indra, Kubera, the moon, and Savitru preside over the seven others.

These eight circles are arranged in two parallel lines. A ninth, placed by itself, is dedicated to all the gods. All the circles are purified by being smeared over with cow-dung, on the top of which they scatter *darbha* grass. They then offer *puja* in turn to the deity presiding over each circle.

Meanwhile the person about to undergo the ordeal bathes without removing his clothing, and while still quite wet places himself in the first circle of the line on the west side, his face towards the east. They then dip his hands into wheat flour mixed with curdled milk, and cover them over with seven leaves of the *aswatta* tree, seven leaves of *choni*, and seven stalks of *darbha* grass.

A blacksmith then heats a small iron rod in the fire to a red heat. The rod should be about eight inches long, and the weight of fifty

rupees. Then the *purohita* places some fire purified according to the rites of his Veda to the south of the ninth circle and performs the *homam*. He invokes the goddess of Virtue in the same words as those used in the ordeal by scales. He throws the red-hot iron into water; and after it has been re-heated to the same degree, he speaks as follows:—

'Fire, you are the Four Vedas, and as such I offer you *homam*. You are the countenance of all the gods, and you are also the countenance of all learned men. You take away all our sins, and that is why you are called pure and purifying. I am the greatest of sinners, but I have the happiness to see you. Purify me from all my sins, and if this man who is about to undergo this ordeal is really innocent, refrain for his sake from making use of your natural power of burning, and do him no harm.'

He finishes his discourse by doing homage to the power which this element possesses of penetrating into the inmost recesses of the human heart and discovering the truth. Then he says:—

'Glory to the three worlds!' and finally pronounces this evocation: 'O fire, come near! come near and stay here! stay here!' and he offers *puja*. The accused places himself in the first circle, and the *purohita*, taking up the bar of hot iron with some tongs, says again: 'O fire, you know the secrets of men! reveal the truth to us on this occasion!' At the same moment he puts the red-hot iron on the hands of the accused, who then, still keeping hold of the iron, runs over all the circles, in such a manner as to place his feet alternately on all. Arrived at the eighth circle he throws the iron into the ninth on to some straw, which should be set on fire by the contact.

In the case of the accused dropping the iron before he has covered the whole distance, the trial would have to begin over again. If, on an inspection of his hands, it is seen that the iron has not injured the skin, he is considered innocent. An accidental burn on any other part of his body would not count. To make quite sure that contact with the red-hot iron has produced no sensible effect on the skin, the accused is given some unhusked rice, which he has to rub vigorously between his hands to separate the grains from the husk.

The preparatory formalities for the ordeal by water are much the same as the preceding ones. For this they draw a single circle in which they place flowers and incense. A stake is also driven into a tank or a river where the current is not too strong. Near this stake the accused must place himself, the water being up to his waist. The *purohita*, with his face to the east, then speaks these words:—

'Water, you are the life of all that has life; you create and destroy

at will; you purify everything, and we may always be sure to learn the truth when we take you for judge. Settle the doubtful question which now concerns us and tell us whether this man is guilty or not.'

Some one is then told to go a certain distance and to return. During the time so occupied the accused must immerse himself completely, holding on to the bottom of the stake fixed close to him. If he raises his head above the water before the person returns, he is accounted guilty; if he comes up afterwards, he is declared innocent.

If both accuser and accused are condemned to undergo the ordeal, they must both go under the water at the same time, and he who first comes to the surface to breathe is considered guilty.

The ordeal by poison is preceded by all the usual ceremonies. A little powdered arsenic is mixed in some melted butter. The *purohita* then says:—

'Poison, you are a harmful substance, created to destroy the guilty and impure. You were vomited by the great snake Vasuki to cause the death of guilty giants. Behold a person who is accused of a crime of which he declares himself to be innocent. If in reality he is not guilty, divest yourself of your injurious qualities and become to him as *amrita* (nectar).'

The accused then swallows the poison; and if, though he may feel unwell, he survives for three days, he is proclaimed innocent.

There are also several other kinds of trial by ordeal. Amongst the number is that of boiling oil, which is mixed with cow-dung, and into which the accused must plunge his arm up to the elbow; that of the snake, which consists in shutting up some very poisonous snake in a basket, in which has been placed a ring or a piece of money which the accused must find and bring out with his eyes bandaged; if, in the former case, he is not scalded, and in the latter is not bitten, his innocence is completely proved.

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